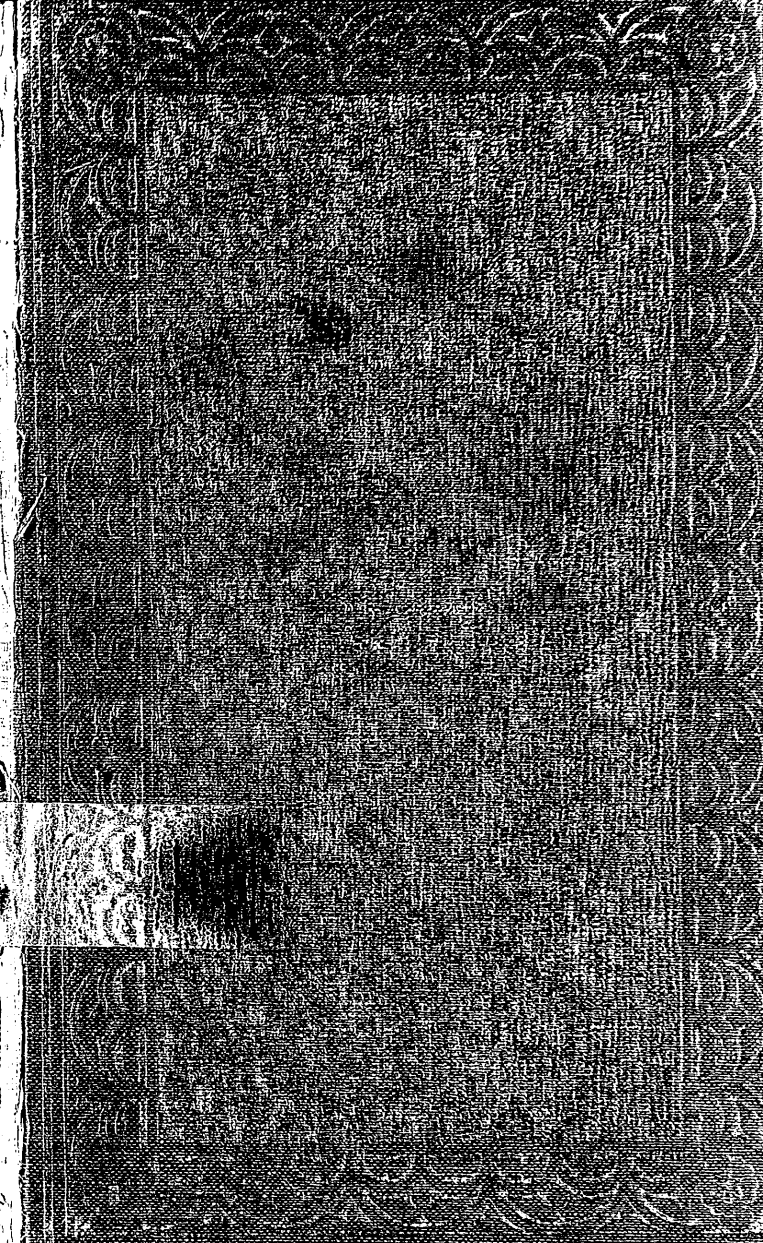


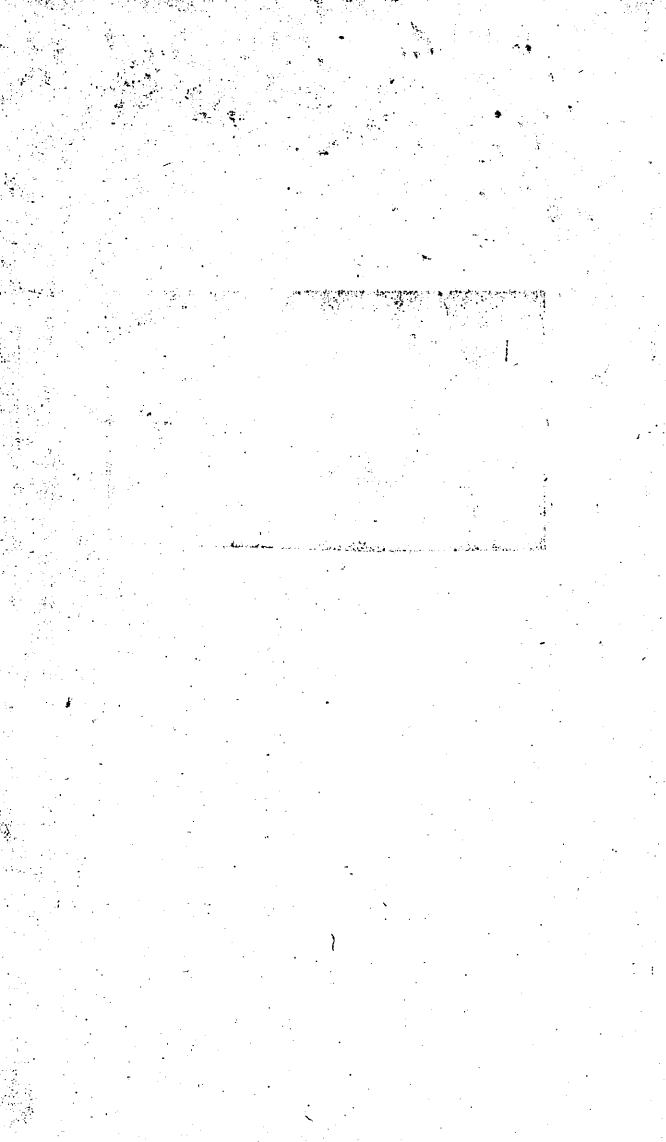




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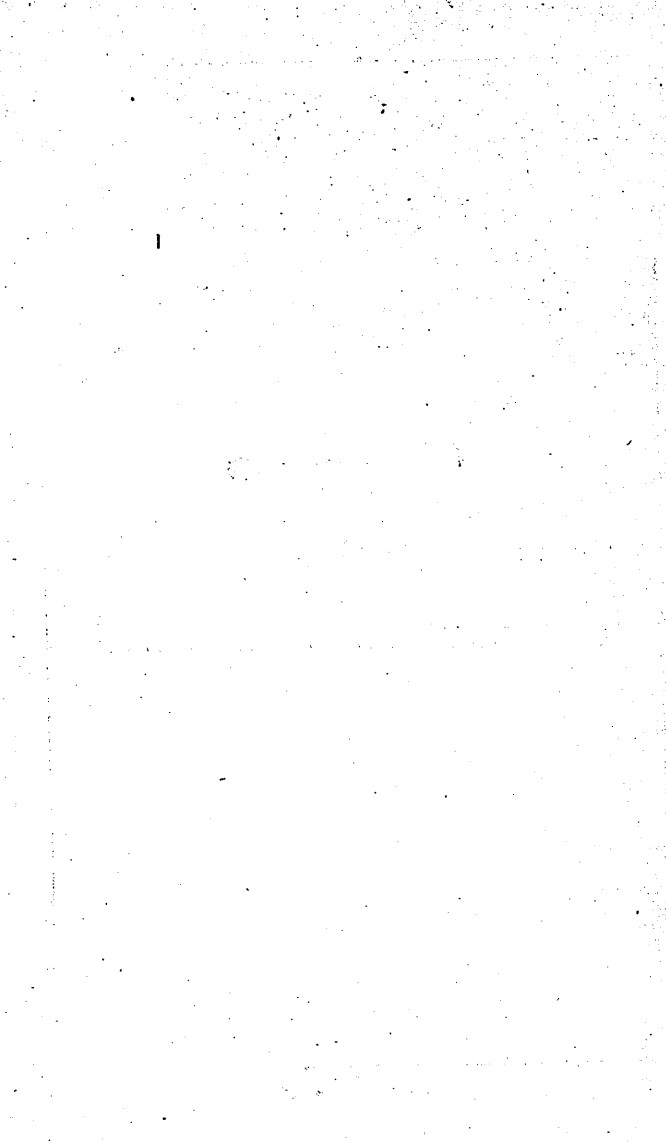




SERMONS

FOR THE

CHRISTIAN SEASONS.



SERMONS
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN SEASONS.

VOL. I.

SECOND SERIES.

FROM ADVENT TO THE FIFTH
SUNDAY IN LENT.

OXFORD,

JOHN HENRY PARKER;

AND 377, STRAND, LONDON.

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TO THE
HONORABLE
MEMBERS OF THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS

AND OF THE
HOUSE OF LORDS

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ADVENT.

THE JUDGMENT.

ROM. xiv. 12. *Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

THE season of Advent, brethren, has ever been observed by Christians as a season to be more especially devoted to prayer and self-examination and the preparing for our Lord's second coming: and you know Holy Scripture speaks of two Advents or comings; the first Advent was when our blessed Lord came to visit us in great humility, when He took upon Him our nature and became man, that as man He might atone for the sins of men; the second Advent will be at the end of the world, when He shall come again with power and great glory to judge both the quick and the dead: the first Advent was to redeem our souls, and to impart to us the gifts and graces which He by His precious blood-

shedding on the cross purchased for us ; the second Advent will be to judge our souls, and to call every one of us to account unto Him, for the way in which we have used the privileges and the gifts which He hath bestowed upon us ; the first Advent is past, we through His infinite mercies have been made partakers of its benefits : we are Christians, members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven ; the second Advent is coming, how soon none can tell, for of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven. Now as this was the season of the year in which the Lord Jesus first came, this is the season of the year in which the Church more especially exhorts us to set our houses in order, and to prepare for that great and fearful day in which every one of us shall give account of himself to God. The beneficial effect, brethren, of having certain times and seasons set apart for certain sacred duties, will, I believe, be readily acknowledged ; we all feel, and at times we all bitterly lament, our proneness to sin, our worldliness and our selfishness, our neglect of God, and inattention to our soul's salvation, our short-comings and lukewarmness, our carelessness and little progress in religion. How many a well-intentioned person

can only say this year as he did the last, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved;" he really intended and promised himself that he would enter upon a stricter, holier life; he thought last Advent that long before the next Advent came he would have made some preparation to meet his God; he really hoped and intended to have done so, but somehow or other, something or other always occurred to induce him to put off his better resolution for a little while; some care, some pleasure, some business, some sorrow seemed to interpose between him and his God, and now when he really comes to ask himself what has been the practical result of all his good intentions, what the progress in holiness, what the improvement in his temper and conduct and manner of life, in short, how he is one degree better prepared to meet his God this year than he was the last, what answer can he make, what proof of his sincerity can he give, what have been the fruits of all his promises and good intentions? Alas, in many and many an instance there has been none; well it is in these cases that the wisdom of the Church in appointing certain seasons for certain duties is more especially shewn, for she meets the lagging, wavering spirit, at such

seasons as the present, and she says to man, You have long promised to seek God, and yet you have not really done so ; you have formed many resolutions of giving up your besetting sin, and turning to the Lord as a true penitent, but yet you have never come as a penitent to be pardoned ; you have often seriously intended, and when you were under sickness or sorrow you solemnly vowed to henceforth serve the Lord. Well, the Church says to this man, Let there be no more delay, let there be no more mocking God with such hollow promises, but begin at once to practise what you promise, this very Advent begin to set your house in order, this very season in which your Lord first came to you, do you prepare to come to Him, and let there be no more delay in supplicating His mercy ; now is the appointed time, it is your appointed time, God gives it to you, and if you use it rightly and begin now to make preparation for His coming, it will prove a lasting blessing to your soul. The object then of the Church in setting apart certain seasons for certain special duties is to fix our wavering minds upon them, and as it were to take us by the hand whilst we are hesitating, and lead us to begin them at once ; let those who have not sincerely

obeyed the teaching of the Church in marking Advent as a time of preparation for their Lord's coming, endeavour to do so this Advent, and they will then know and feel in their own amended lives the blessedness of her teaching.

But, brethren, I would not only urge upon you now the benefit to your own soul, of making this, the season of your Lord's first Advent, the time of your preparing for His second Advent. I would further lead you to consider the very suitableness of the season in which this preparation is to be made,—it is at the close of the year ; it is at the very time when all things round us seem to speak to us of death and of our departure hence ; the flowers of spring which have bloomed so beautifully have all perished and passed away, the leaves upon the trees have withered and died, the harvest upon which our hopes were so anxiously fixed hath now passed, the fields that lately looked so full of life and fruitfulness, as their rich crops waved and bent beneath the wind, now look very desolate and barren, nature hath unclothed herself as one about to rest, the year is hastening to its completion, it hath passed through its appointed seasons, it hath done its work, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter have come and

gone, and now when the year which is so true a type of man's mortal life hath grown old, and is about to pass away, now when it hath done its Creator's bidding, and is about to be rolled as a scroll fully written, now when it is about to leave us and as it departs to remind us that all things on this earth perish and come to nought, now it is that the Church especially calls us to prepare ourselves for that great and awful day when every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

And now, brethren, having reminded you of the benefit of having certain seasons set apart for certain sacred duties, and the suitableness of the present season for preparing for our Lord's Advent, let me lead you to consider further the necessity of making this preparation, and of making this preparation at once. Every one, even the most careless and ungodly liver, will confess that he hopes to be better prepared than he now is, ere he renders up his account to God; I hope, he will say, and I fully purpose, to seek God before I die; I wish and I mean to repent and turn unto the Lord my God before the grave opens to receive me; as if times and seasons were in his power. Even he who is living in wilful sin admits that some preparation must be made;

but, brethren, though all agree in confessing that we must prepare to meet our God, though all know that they cannot call a day or an hour their own, they all are warned again and again by God that there is no repentance in the grave, for as the tree falls so it must lie, yet how few realize to their own minds the necessity of making this preparation at once, how many suffer themselves to be so wholly engrossed with the cares and riches of this world that they practically forget the near approach of the last great judgment-day.

Now, brethren, let us try, if only for a few minutes, to shut out this present world from our minds, and to realize the awful truths contained in the text; let us carry forward our thoughts and as it were ourselves only a few years, perhaps a very few, and hear from God what then shall happen; a few years, brethren, it may be only a few months, or weeks, or even hours, and this world will have passed away, the brief tale of man's mortal life will have been told, the little thread that binds down to earth will have been cut asunder, and we shall be gone hence; all that we have loved, and prized, and toiled so hard to gain, will then be left behind; our money, houses, lands, and several possessions

will then all be abandoned, the grave will shut them out from us ; for naked must we go hence. And when we go hence consider where we go ; we go before the judgment-seat of God, we go to render up our account to Him of all that we have done in this world, whether it be good or whether it be evil. "I saw," saith St. John, "a great white throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them ; and I saw the dead small and great stand before God. And the books were opened, and another book was opened which was the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in that book, according to their works ; and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works ; and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Observe, my brethren, and for your souls' sake mark well this solemn truth, that after death will come the judgment ; that after we have been laid in our graves we shall be summoned by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, to come forth and meet our Lord. There is something

very solemn and very awful in the thought of each one in our own nakedness being called before that throne, and looking upon Him that sitteth thereon, and hearing from His lips the sentence that shall either exalt us to heaven, or cast us down into hell, and that for ever and ever.

More solemn, more awful, is the thought that that sentence which will then be passed upon us, depends upon our conduct now; that each day, each week, each year, as it passes by, is all silently, gradually, but most surely adding its measure of weight to the scales by which we shall be judged at last. "The dead," saith St. John, "were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." "Every one of us," saith St. Paul, "shall give an account of himself to God;" inasmuch then as the sentence which will be passed upon us by the Judge at the last great day, depends upon our conduct now, how necessary, brethren, that we take heed to ourselves, and walk circumspectly in this world; how necessary that we prepare ourselves and turn unto the Lord our God; how necessary that we obey the call and that instantly, which saith, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, and call upon

Him while He is near ;” and, my brethren, it is with the earnest prayer that we may all be prepared to go forth and meet our God when the cry shall be heard throughout the world, Behold, He cometh ! it is with the fervent hope that we may not be condemned of the Lord in that day ; that I would exhort each of you to have often in your minds this Advent these very simple, very solemn words, “ Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.” Think well and sincerely, whilst God gives you time to do so, what is the account which each one of us will have to make in that day ; the account, brethren, of our whole lives from our childhood up, the account of every sin that we have ever committed either in thought, or word, or deed ; sins of our youth, when we gave way to folly, idleness, intemperance, disobedience to parents, and the lusts of the flesh ; sins of our manhood, when we gave ourselves up to the world and its false hopes, when we made self our idol, and served our own foolish pride or ambition, or habits of life which led to violence, and strife, and envying ; sins also of our old age, when all the wild and wayward passions of our past lives seem to centre in the one besetting sin of covetousness : all these, brethren, are to be accounted for just as they hap-

pened, we cannot gloss them over or hide them, or keep them back from the knowledge of the judge, for the judge to whom we are to render our account is Almighty God, He who not only remembers every thing as it is written down in the great book, but He who actually witnessed it: God saw it, God heard it, God read the very thoughts and intents of your heart in doing it, and therefore God cannot be deceived.

This then, brethren, is the account which we have to render, the account of our own selves, of our own lives, of our every act, and word, and thought; look back upon your own lives and think what that account must be. This also is the judge to whom you must render your account, Almighty God, He who hath seen all, and heard all, and remembered all; is not the thought of our standing at the tribunal of God to render up this account, it may be this night, or to-morrow, or the day after, a thought that overwhelms us? what shall I do when He appeareth, and what shall I answer when He riseth up to judgment? Brethren, of ourselves we could do nothing, but we have a Mediator, an Intercessor, an Advocate with the Father, who is all-sufficient, and that Mediator now bids us come out and separate ourselves from all sin, and turn unto the Lord

our God in real repentance and contrition ; that Mediator bids us come to Him and henceforth follow the blessed steps of His holy life ; that Mediator promises to those who thus come to Him a full and free forgiveness from all sin, a restoration to the lost mercies of God, and an inheritance with the saints in glory. To thus repent, brethren, to thus break from all our old and evil ways, to thus seek Christ, to thus humbly follow in His footsteps, must be our preparation ; if we do do this heartily, sincerely, and immediately, we shall find mercy ; and if we do it not, or if we only do it feignedly, we shall find that those whose names were not written in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ADVENT SUNDAY.

PREPARATION FOR THE LAST DAY:—WATCHFULNESS.

ROM. xiii. 11. *Now it is high time to awake out of sleep.*

THE weeks in Advent, which begin to-day, should lead our thoughts from the first coming of our Saviour in great humility, to that second appearance of His when He shall come in His glorious majesty to judge the earth. Oh! are we any way preparing for that tremendous day? What would we not give when the Son of Man shall really shew Himself, for one year's longer respite! and are we without intention, if God spare us, of rightly using that which is now beginning? So many a month used not at all, or to many an evil end; so much long-suffering and so many mercies from our God allowed to pass unheeded by; so much teaching and training of the Church unsought, or perchance despised, or even miscalled; all these will come

quickly before us and cover us with confusion. Shall we not be forced to confess that our lives have been for the most part a madness: spent as if they never were to have an end, or as if no account of our time, our talents, and our words would be required? Shall we not then say, Would to God we had listened while we might? would that we had thought of this awful hour, when the services of the Church, or the seasons of the year, or the dealings of God's providence, brought it before us? Let us, then, do so this year: let us consider what feelings the thought of the judgment to come should arouse in us, and how they should make us act. To help us in this search I intend, by God's grace, during the Sundays of this Advent to consider some of the duties we should exercise in preparation for the second coming of our Lord. The chief of these are, I think:—

1. Watchfulness; that that day may not come upon us as a thief in the night.
2. Hope; that we may look forward to deliverance from sin and evil, and the glory that shall then, it may be, be revealed in us.
3. A holy fear; lest any of us should seem to come short of our rest.
4. Constant communion with Christ; that

we may rejoice to see Him at last face to face, and know Him even as we are known.

The text brings the first of these duties, that of watchfulness, very forcibly before us to-day: "Now," says the Apostle, "it is high time to awake out of sleep . . . The night is far spent, the day is at hand." In their first meaning, indeed, these words refer to the dawn of true religion in the preaching of the gospel, and its being a light to lighten the gentiles as they wandered in the darkness of ignorance and sin. According to this sense they would be an exhortation to the Romans that they lived not as other gentiles, fond of their errors, chained with their sins: but that now their darkness was passing away, they should live up to the greater light vouchsafed to them. The night of heathen customs and corruption was then fast passing away: the apostles of the Lord and their followers had issued out, publishing salvation; their sound had begun to go forth into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world. And so the day-spring from on high, the bright and clear revelation of God and of His will, was about to visit all the world, and the earth was being filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. It was high time there-

fore that Christians awoke from their sleep; they had, while heathens, slumbered long enough in their sins, and now they had need arise and live as children of the day.

This, I say, would be the first meaning of the passage; but, like most of the other services for this season, our Church intends it to have a further application. It is not merely a warning to those who had for some time lived in idolatry and blindness, but were now called to the truth: but it is addressed also to each of us now. We have ever since our birth lived in the full noon of Christian light: we have had God's word ever before our eyes, and sounding in our ears: if we have gone wrong it is not that we lacked a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths: but because we would not listen, would not use the knowledge we have, would not follow the guidance thus provided for us. To us therefore the passage reads another lesson. The sleep out of which we are to awake is not only that of ignorance and error; the night, not only that of dark idolatry; nor the day, the coming of the messengers only of the Lord.

But it is high time for us to awake, because that night by which Christ's presence is concealed may come we know not how soon to an

end: the day is at hand when with a greater brightness than that of the sun, our Judge shall burst upon the world. "His head and His hairs," says St. John, "are white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace: . . . and His countenance as the sun shineth in his strength." To the heart that loveth Him it is now night, for this visible world and these bodies of flesh hide Him from our sight; to the heart also that would forget Him it is night, for it as yet sins unrebuked, and conceals its wickedness from the eyes of men. But bye and bye, when the trial of God's elect is finished, when He has gathered His saints into their rest, and all things are now accomplished, this darkness will be removed, and we shall "see the King in His beauty." Happy shall we be if, like His disciples at His entering into Jerusalem, we can rejoice to be with Him, and say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Wretched indeed will be our lot if we have to tremble hopelessly when the thoughts of our hearts shall be made known, and we be forced to take to ourselves the words, repeated this day as a warning to us by the prophet, "Enter into the rock, and hide thyself in the

dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty.”

The night then of our Saviour's absence from our sight, may we know not how soon come to its end: watchfulness is our only security that it will not end long long before we are ready for the dawn. Years have already gone by since He said, Behold I come speedily. Every year that passes shortens the time, not only of our own life and day of grace, but of His waiting till He comes again. We have a great work to do and little time to do it, and how little we know not. We are like persons sitting expecting a master's return, and unless we keep ourselves awake and be watchful we shall be found unprepared to meet Him.

But what is watchfulness? and what is it for the soul to be asleep? If it be high time that we awake out of our sleep, we must know what that sleep is which we are to shake off. Now there are one or two ways in which we may be said to be spiritually asleep.

1. First, when we are careless altogether about religion; then are we dangerously sleeping. Watch by the bed-side of one fallen into a deep slumber,—the sun may shine brightly on him, or the storm may rage outside, the voice of his

friends may sound in his chamber, or the foot-fall of those who would hurt him may echo around, yet he is unmoved. He stirs not hand or foot, and is for the time insensible alike to the approach of good or evil. Just so also it is with the careless soul. God may shine upon it with all worldly prosperity, or may send the rufflings of misfortune ; the sinner's best friends may speak to him of his helpless condition in the very midst of his forgetfulness, and his adversary the evil one will doubtless be busy trying to destroy him ; but he, unhappy soul, is wholly regardless, nothing will arouse him. It is too much trouble to stir himself and think of God ; it would interfere too much with his pleasures to begin to be religious ; and so he goes to his grave, without once thinking, it would seem, that he has an awakening beyond it to shame and everlasting contempt.

If any of you be in any way approaching to this state, listen to-night to the Apostle's words. You have been careless long enough, you have put off the thoughts of religion till you know not how near you may be to that day when praying will be too late, and Christ will come in vengeance to you, since you would not turn in repentance to Him. Is it really a matter of no importance to you that you should thus run

the risk of losing your soul? Is it really your deliberate belief that it is better to be taken up with thoughts of business, or amusement, or any of the ten thousand trifles of this world, than to be seeking God's favour? Can you, now you are brought face to face with your actual condition, can you say that it is a happy one, or one suited to you as reasonable beings? Is there not after all a feeling in you of dissatisfaction; is not your sleep, deep though it be, yet full of disquiet? Seek then a better rest: be persuaded to try another plan of being happy: try whether it may not after all be better to listen to the minister of Christ, when he says, "It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

2. Another state of sleep in the soul is when we are living not only in carelessness of God, but in habits of sin. These two may be very different: we may very well know and sometimes think about God, and yet again and again give ourselves up to sin. Now this is if possible a still more dangerous sleep than the former. It is as if we had been once and again aroused, but turned to our sloth again. It is one thing for a person to lie in a deep sleep and not to know

what is going on around him, because there is hope that, if he is once awakened and knows the danger he is in, he will start up and seize the opportunity of escaping from destruction. But if a man has been wakened, has been told that a fire is raging very near him, has really roused himself and looked about him, and thought of getting up, or actually prepared to do so, and then laid down again, and said he would lie on a while,—would you not think his case almost hopeless? Still you would try to urge him to awake out of sleep. So it may be with some of us; yet it is possible at length with a strong effort of the will to rouse ourselves thoroughly; it is possible *at once* decidedly to throw off the lazy slumbering of the love of sin and to turn with a determined will to serve God. Do so now: do not hesitate, do not delay, or say, Tomorrow, or, Another time; any time but now. *Now* is the time. *Now* it is high time to awake out of sleep. Will it not be far better to make ever so great an exertion now to rid yourselves of these bands, than to bear them as chains for ever? Seek God's grace to help you, let nothing keep you back; let not the love of sinful pleasure, or the dread of a change of life, or having to choose new companions frighten

you. It is better to bear the mockery of fools now than the malice of devils hereafter.

3. Lastly, if we be not asleep in either of these ways, we may be so in neglecting opportunities of doing good, and of winning grace. A sleeping man can take advantage of no good fortune, can seize no occasion of helping himself, and so the sleeping soul passes by all God's good gifts of grace. He cares nothing for prayer, or the reading of God's word, or for the sacraments. Content with his present inactive state, unwilling to be disturbed, to reach out and lay hold of the blessings presented to him, he loses his salvation more for want of moving than from moving wrong.

Opposed to all these tempers is the spirit of watchfulness; of the being *awake*, really acquainted with our own condition and our own prospects, knowing where we are and what we are, alive to the dangers that surround us, quick to avoid being surprized, and ready to seize every advantage that may help us on our heavenward course.

Above all this being awake is being watchful in looking for the coming of our Lord, and ready for being ourselves called on—we know not how soon—to meet Him.

You know how often and under how many figures our Lord impresses this duty upon us. We are to be like servants sitting up during the night waiting for their master, and keeping themselves awake, and ready to open to Him on His arrival. To be like persons who expect that their house will be attempted by robbers, but do not know at what time they will come; like friends expecting the return from a distant country of one they love; like the virgins waiting for the bridegroom, ready to join in His procession and to go with Him in to the feast. You know how watchful persons are in cases such as these, how they listen for every sound, and look out for every sign that may shew the coming to be near. Above all, how they take care to have everything in readiness, and be themselves fit for meeting him whom they expect. You remember the warning against saying, My Master delays his coming, I will eat and drink, and take my pleasure. You remember the exhortation to have your loins girt about and your lights burning; and the warning of those virgins who had to go and buy their oil when the bridegroom was actually come.

Let then this season, when the Church calls us to awake, not pass by without our attending

to her call. We may think any time will do for us to awake, we may fancy the night to be but begun ; alas ! how sadly shall we be undeceived, how unhappily shall we be awakened if we wait till the trumpet shall sound. God grant us all to lay these things to heart while we may. May He of His goodness arouse the careless, release the sinner from his bonds, and enable us all to use aright the blessings of His grace.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

PREPARATION FOR THE LAST DAY.—HOPE.

ROM. xv. 13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

WE saw last Sunday that the suddenness of Christ's coming at the last day should teach us the duty of watchfulness ; that perchance the night of His being hidden from us is even now drawing towards its end ; and so it is high time to awake out of sleep, that we may be ready to meet Him. May I suppose that some of you have seriously considered this ? May I consider you as having really laid to heart the danger there would be were you to go on in carelessness, or in habitual sin, or in neglect of the opportunities of preparing yourselves to meet Him, your Saviour and your Judge ? Or has all been forgotten ? Let us hope better things of you, my brethren ; let us believe that at least you have a desire now at any rate to set your house in order, lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping and unprepared. If this then be the case with us, if we are really

watching, and are really preparing ourselves by sincere repentance and amendment of life for the second coming of our Lord, we shall be ready to learn the lesson which the Church would especially teach us in the services of this day: that is, the lesson of *hope*, that we should look forward to our Lord's coming in *hope*.

In the collect we pray God to grant us so to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest His holy word, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed *hope* of everlasting life; and what we pray for in the collect we are taught in the epistle, and the text is the prayer of St. Paul that God would give *hope* more and more to his converts.

And that this hope is to be cherished with respect to our Lord's second coming the Gospel shews us: for our Lord says, when He has spoken of the awful signs of that coming, and of the last day; "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

I know that at first sight it seems strange to many good Christians, that we should speak of looking forward to that awful day with hope. The consciousness of their own short-comings, and of that day being the end of our time of

grace, makes them rather feel fear when they think of it; and undoubtedly we ought to feel fear,—hope and fear both; but to-day we are speaking of hope;—another time, if it please God, we will speak of fear; following the guidance of the Church services, we will speak of hope to-day, because that will enable us to fear without despairing.

Now consider; when we are waiting for the return of Him who is our best and kindest friend, who has redeemed us by His own most bitter sufferings, who has shewn His love to us by continually holding us up through our whole life on earth, who has watched over us with loving-kindness, and has promised to come again, and to take us to Himself to live with Him for ever;—when we are waiting and watching for Him thus to come again, shall we not watch in hope? One sitting at home, watching for the promised return of his dearest friend, would feel both joy and hope in the prospect of his coming, and, as the night wears away, would find hope the chief comfort of his weary waiting: and if his coming should seem to be long delayed, how would his heart beat fast at every sound, and how often would the sigh escape from his lips, O would that he were come!

Just such should be the state of the devout Christian watching for his Lord: as the night of the world,—the dreary time of temptations and trials, the seeming triumph of sin and evil,—still continues, he finds the hope of His coming the chief stay in his weariness; if troubles arise, or doubt gathers in upon him, only so much the stronger must his trust be to prevent his falling into despair. But if in the midst of this long tarrying some signs of the bridegroom's approach should appear, or some symptoms of his own speedy departure to Him shew themselves, his heart is stirred, and he is enabled to say with St. John—"Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus."

It may seem that this description is overdrawn; you may think that no one can, and therefore that no one ought thus to look with hope for Christ's coming. But if so, what do the exhortations of Holy Scripture mean, or that passage in to-day's gospel, which I have noticed, where our Lord says to His disciples:—"and when these things," i.e. the signs of His return, "begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh?" Surely He would have us learn that we are to raise our eyes to heaven to catch the first glim-

mer of His glorious approach, that we are to look forward with earnest expectation for our salvation, to wit the redemption of our bodies from sorrow and from sin.

Let us consider first whether hope be not a duty ; and whether it do not imply something more than mere comfort to ourselves.

First, then, hope is a duty for all who love God, and are truly and earnestly endeavouring to do His will. It might seem at first rather a privilege for those that are perfect saints : we may feel that so long as we are so weak, as we cannot but know ourselves to be, so long as we every day fall short so much of what we ought to be, Christ's appearance would be dreadful only, not joyful. But there can be no doubt in the mind of any careful reader of God's word that this feeling is not to be so confined. Does not St. Paul make hope one of the principal Christian virtues ? does he not say, " Now abideth these three, faith, hope, charity ?" Again, St. Peter expressly recommends it with respect to our Lord's second coming : " Gird up," he says, " the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." And once more, St. Paul twice mentions this

virtue as a necessary part of the Christian's armour; "Take the helmet of salvation," he says to the Ephesians, which he elsewhere explains by saying that we should take for an helmet "the *hope* of salvation." Thus then there can be little doubt that hope, and particularly the hope of Christ's coming and our own salvation, is not merely a comfortable assurance granted to some few, but what ought to be cherished by every true Christian.

It is due to God that we should hope in Him. It is due to His mercy and loving-kindness. We do not glorify Him as we ought, if we do not hope in Him. Faith acknowledges the truthfulness of God, that He will not deceive us, that whatever He has said is true, and that whatever He has promised He will most certainly perform; hope springs from the thought of His power, His love, and His promises. I need scarcely say I am speaking of true and real Christians, of those who are endeavouring to live as in God's sight and according to His will. To encourage others to hope whilst they continue careless and unrepenting, would be to heal their wounds slightly, and to say peace, when there is no peace. Whilst they continue as they are, they are such as the apostle describes, "Having *no hope*, and without

God in the world." Like sailors tossed on a stormy sea in the blackness of darkness, no compass, no stars to guide or to cheer them, but a dreary prospect of judgment to come; as we read in Holy Scripture of the withered herb; "So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish, whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be like a spider's web." But as soon as ever one really and heartily turns to God, the bright beams of hope shine upon him. Even at the very first, some hope there must be to lift him up, or he would sink down in despair: and as he goes on and has an increasing evidence of his own sincerity, and fuller experience of the faithfulness and exceeding love of His Saviour, he gains more and more ground to *hope* that nothing will be wanting on God's part for his salvation; and to trust that He who has begun a good work in him, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. But whilst Christians generally feel that to hope thus is a duty, a consolation, and the great support of the soul, they do not so readily see that we may and ever ought to look for the return of our Lord with hope. And yet if there is one thing more prominent in the New Testament, it is this, that Christians should hope, desire, and even long for the return of Christ.

For what will that coming be? It will be the ending of that mystery, the power of evil, which now exists; the influence of evil men, their proud and contemptuous unbelief, their mockery, their oppression of the good, their opposition to the truth, will come to an end. All the struggles, the labours, the sufferings of the good will be over: and rest and peace and the enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven and of the presence of God will come instead. To look on then to the second coming of Christ is to look for deliverance, for our full and complete redemption, when the body and soul will be reunited in glory. It is the safe shore to the sea-tost sailor, the haven of rest. It is restoration to home and to long-severed friends, the departed saints and the blessed angels. It is deliverance to the prisoner, who will then be set free from captivity. It is indeed to be attained by our passing through a fearful trial, each of us one by one; but if we have been faithful unto death, the hand of our merciful Saviour will then stay us up, even when we stand before Him as our Judge; and if the signs of His coming be dreadful, as He Himself describes them,—“signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves

roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth;" yet in the midst of all, the servants of Christ are bidden to look up and lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh. Strange as this may seem you will see that it is true: for Christians, during the reign of sin and evil in the world, are like prisoners in some beleaguered city; and when they hear the sounds of war drawing nearer and nearer, the cannons roaring, the shoutings and mingled cries, when the walls tremble and the towers fall,—these sounds, which carry terror and dismay into the hearts of their enemies, are to them sounds of joy and omens of their deliverance. When these things—terrible as they are in themselves, and causing utter despair to the enemies of the conquering King—begin to come to pass, then they look up, and lift up their heads, for their deliverance is drawing near, and fearful and trembling as they may themselves be, not knowing what may happen to them, yet they hope and even rejoice.

But that our hope be well grounded and sincere it must rest on faith. St. Paul says in Heb. vi. that "God has given us a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which hope,"

he continues, "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Our hope must rest upon those heavenly things which are now hidden as it were by a veil from our sight; it must be fixed not on any of these things that are seen, but upon the invisible world above. Christian hope manifestly implies a strong faith, a constant living as in the unseen world.

Again, it is the fruit of patience in well-doing. "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed." That is, such a hope as will not deceive us, or make us ashamed of having once entertained it, is founded upon that experience of our own stedfastness and firmness which the patient enduring of tribulation and trial alone can produce.

Again, it implies a purifying of ourselves; St. John says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He (i. e. Christ) shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." And then he adds, "and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

What a picture was that when at Bethany the twelve apostles stood watching the Son of Man as a cloud received Him out of their sight ! What a noble hope was born in them, as, filled with the splendour of that departure, they heard the angel's voice declare, " This same Jesus, whom ye have seen go into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." How rejoicingly would they return to their labours and their trials, in full expectation that they would one day be partakers of His glory ! Would not that last view of their Master be often in their mind ? Would they not long once again to see Him, and to be welcomed by Him to that home He had gone to prepare for them ?

We indeed have not seen Him go ; we know not yet the sweetness of His countenance, nor the brightness of that glorious cloud of angels with which He shall appear ; but yet we must see Him in one way or other ; we must be overshadowed by that cloud. Oh that we may find in Him our exceeding great reward ; that we may not be strangers in His sight, but that we may be known as His, and He as ours.

Let us then fix our faith more and more upon that heavenly home. Will it not be most for

your real good to set your purpose upon reaching that happy resting place? Will it not be better to escape the tossings to and fro of fear and earthly care, and to live for that end, to feel that all the storm and annoyance you may now suffer from worldly people and daily vexations, are only on the top and do not reach the depth of your real life? Upon that shore on which our hope is fixed all these are utterly powerless. Cast then your anchor there; think to-day, and think at stated times at least during this holy season, of that blessed home, and see how best you may reach it.

Again, let us take care not to be soon moved from our better resolutions, let us hold us still in the Lord and abide constantly by Him; that when heaven and earth are shaken, our feet may stand firm upon the Rock of Ages. To all who are cast down with sorrow, or disappointment, or difficulties in the way of life, I would say, "Patience worketh experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed;" wait yet a little longer, the night will soon be passed, and day will bring Him whom you long for; "He that cometh will come, and will not tarry."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING.—FEAR.

HEBREWS iv. 1. *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*

ON the past Sundays we have considered two of those dispositions of mind with which we ought to look forward to the second coming of our Lord,—two states of heart and ways of feeling which this sacred season especially calls on us to cultivate—watchfulness, and hope. Watchfulness, that we may not be overtaken when we are unprepared, and hope, that we may be cheered by looking for His coming to deliver us, in the trust that He who has hitherto helped us will Himself accomplish the good work that He has begun in us in the day of Jesus Christ. The third disposition which we ought to have, and which we ought also to cultivate, that we may feel it aright, is godly fear.

Many of you, no doubt, will be disposed to say, Of course we cannot help feeling fear when we think of the last day: there is no need that we should be instructed or exhorted to fear it, we do fear it already. It is so fearful that we dare scarcely think of it at all. All the descriptions that we read of it in Scripture are so terrible—the ruin of the world, its being burnt up with fire, and the awful thought of having to meet our God, when He will condemn the ungodly to everlasting misery, are so fearful, that we cannot look upon them in any other way than in fear.

And indeed, I believe that these thoughts are so very full of terror, that persons do put them out of their minds altogether. They turn away from the subject as one which they cannot bear to dwell upon, and the sad consequence is, that they forget it, and lose sight of that day altogether, and fall into the way of those of whom St. Peter speaks, who scoffed and said, “Where is the promise of His coming? all things continue as they were from the beginning;” they bring themselves to forget that the world will have an end, that Christ will really come again, and that we must all stand before His judgment-seat. And thus the fear of that day,

which is designed by God to be a great help to us in doing good, by being felt in a wrong way defeats its own purpose. We are afraid in a wild uncertain way, we turn our thoughts from that which we fear, and so at last we come not to be afraid at all, and so not to avoid the danger; shutting our eyes steadily, or diverting our thoughts by gaiety or worldly occupations, that we may forget what will certainly come whether we think of it or not. Just like those miserable men who have been known to make themselves drunk when great danger was before them, drowning their fear, but ensuring their destruction.

It is important for us to fear, but to fear in a right way, and to act as wise men would act when they know and understand what the object of their fear really is; that is, to endeavour to secure ourselves from harm, and as we cannot escape from the trial itself, to seek that we may pass through it safely. If we have to meet Christ at the last day, it is wise to put away all that may offend Him, and (as we know we may, through His great mercy and loving kindness) to be now reconciled to Him by true repentance, and earnest loving obedience.

On the other hand there *are* persons, who say

that Christians ought not to have any fear when they look forward to that day—they even say, that they cannot be *real* Christians if they have any fear. Such persons teach that there is no fear in a real Christian, and as to the last day, they speak of it as if it was not a day of *judgment* at all, at least to true believers, as if to them it was only a day of triumph and of glory. But we have not been so taught. The Holy Scriptures, and the Church following the Holy Scriptures, have plainly taught us otherwise; namely, that every one of us must be judged for what we have done, and that we have, every one of us, reason to fear as well as to hope, in looking forward to that day. How this is we shall see presently.

It is true that Holy Scripture says, “Perfect love casteth out fear;” but such persons misapply the text; they begin, if we may so say, at the wrong end, and think that by casting away all fear, they shall have perfect love. On the contrary, let us grow in love, and we shall certainly lose that *tormenting* slavish fear of God, of which alone the apostle is speaking, which prevents us from looking upon Him as a reconciled Father, as a most loving friend.

One kind of fear there is which we should

never lose, and which the best Christians feel the most deeply, I mean the fear of doing anything that may displease our God and Saviour. This kind of fear grows with our love, just as the more a child really loves a parent, the more fearful is he of doing anything, however small, which that parent would not wish him to do. He fears his father, fears, that is, to displease him, because he loves him; and as he loves him more, is the more careful and on his guard not to do anything which is at all contrary to his father's wish.

And infinitely must such a fear be increased when the object of it is God Almighty, infinitely holy, that searcheth the hearts, and sees every secret most deeply buried there, the great and Holy God, who chargeth even His angels with folly.

But besides this fear of offending Almighty God, our loving Father, and our kindest friend, there is another fear, which a Christian may and ought to feel, but to feel together with his hope and trust in God; and that is a fear lest he himself should fall away, and fail of his great prize, the salvation of his soul at the last day.

If it was not for our knowledge of God being with us, staying us up and helping us in every

trial, the knowledge of our own great weakness and inclination to sin, and the temptations and trials which come upon us, would make this fear so great that it would become mere despair. And we should be tempted to give up all exertion, as though our persevering to the end was quite hopeless. I mention this, the rather because it is a very common suggestion of Satan. He whispers to us, You need not go through all this pain of watching over your thoughts, and taking care of your actions, denying yourself, foregoing pleasures which others enjoy freely, doing what you do not like, for you can never endure the trial, you will certainly fall, and then what will be the use of all your pains-taking and all your prayers? There is one answer ready to such suggestions, God will never leave us nor forsake us while we are true to ourselves; He desires our salvation, and He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear.

But then we know very well we may not be true to ourselves; we are surrounded by dangers and temptations, by many subtle enemies, and we have very weak and deceitful hearts within us; and as it really depends on ourselves whether we yield to temptation or not, whether we continue in our good courses or not—as God's

grace does not take us out of the way of temptation, does not free us from the danger of falling under it; we have great reason to fear, *lest we fall*.

And this, you remember, is what the apostle continually reminds us of. He says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall." And again, "Be not high-minded, but *fear*;" and again, "Work out your own salvation *with fear and trembling*;" and again, "Let us *fear*, lest a promise being given us of entering into that rest any of us should seem to come short of it." And what he recommends to others, he practises himself: for he says, that he kept under his body and brought it into subjection, lest that by any means when he had preached to others he himself should be a castaway. When we look forward then to the future we ought to do so with fear, joined with faith and hope; with faith and hope in the assured love and power of God; with fear lest we should not correspond to that love, but should fall from Him. And you see how good it is for us thus to fear. For who are more likely to escape danger than those who fear it beforehand, provided that their fear does not lead them to despair? Who are so likely to be on their guard against loitering on the way when an

enemy is pursuing them, as those who fear that enemy? Who so likely to be watchful in their walking, as those who fear their own weakness, and know their danger of slipping? He that is forewarned is forearmed; whereas confidence, a reckless fearless confidence, is the surest fore-runner of a fall.

And this fear must be beyond measure increased when we think of our Lord's coming and of *the last day*. For we know not how suddenly it may come upon us; whether it may not find us unprepared. And the consequence of our being found unprepared, is our utter ruin.

Again, we know not how great the trial of that awful time will be. Everything that to our mind is most fearful is spoken as coming with it; the sun darkened, the moon and the stars failing, the earth shaking, mountains falling, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear. We know not what that means of which the apostle speaks, the being saved, yet so as by (or through) fire. But all that we read points to some dreadful trial, and leads us to look forward to a great danger of falling, and to pray especially to be delivered at that day, as well as at the hour of death.

But we look forward to the last day with fear

because it *is* THE LAST DAY. There will be no more days, no more opportunities of working out our salvation, no more prayers, no more sacraments, no more repentance ; what that day finds undone must remain undone for ever. If we are not ready the door will be closed, and we shut out for ever. Time is at an end ; as the tree falls then, so it must lie ; as we are found then, so, for weal or woe, we must remain for ever. No more recovering ourselves, no more making up for the past, no more redeeming lost time by increased speed or diligence ; it is *the last day*. The time of God's waiting and His patience is over, and our fate is sealed for ever and ever.

If anything can be added to this awful thought it is the knowledge that we must one by one stand before the throne of God and be judged by Him ; that God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. That the books will be opened and the dead will be judged out of those things that are written in them ; that God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts ; and that He who will do this is our God, who is a consuming fire. Good need have we to remember that He is our Saviour. . But that thought,

which awakens our hope, does not shut out our fear.

Hope we ought to have to cheer us, that we may look through and past the danger to the good things which are laid up for those that really love God; *fear*, to make us earnest and diligent in working out our salvation while we have time; *hope* to sustain our flagging spirits; *fear* to make us feel the need of carefulness, that we may be on the safe side and may secure our heavenly prize; fear, lest by neglect, or by remitting our watchfulness, or by falling back into sin, we defeat the good purpose of God towards us, and He come and find us unfit for His kingdom. It is this fear which has made Christians ever regard that day as indeed terrible. The thought of works unfinished, of sins unrepented, of repentance incomplete, of the laying open of what they knew not of evil in themselves, the bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, the fading away of all that ever seemed good in them; these thoughts have made them ever regard that day as a day of terror—as the apostle, speaking of it, says, “Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.” The thoughts of this fearful day have ever roused them to greater earnestness, deeper repentance,

more zealous service. It has driven them from all confidence in themselves, or in anything they could do for themselves, and thrown them simply on the mercy of their Saviour, their only hope and support in that dreadful day. It has led them on to look to that as the end; to pray (with the apostle) for themselves and those they love, that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and to think of all He has done for them, to plead all His sufferings, to entreat Him to remember His past acts of mercy, and so simply to trust themselves to His infinite redeeming love.

Bring home to yourselves, my brethren, the thought that you must each one appear before the "great white throne,"—think of Him that will be seated thereon—think of all the companies of heaven and all the inhabitants of earth gathered together in dread expectation. Realize to yourselves that one by one you must be brought forward. One by one we are born; one by one we must die; and one by one we must be judged. And there can be no concealment there. Every disguise with which we may here cover ourselves will be then stripped from us; every specious excuse with which we may now blind our own eyes will be taken away, and we

shall be in the midst of those realities which here so often we refuse to recognise. What shall be our stay in that hour? How shall we be sustained? one stay, one strength alone we have, but that is all-powerful,—One who has reconciled us to Himself: One who has vouchsafed to call us brethren: One who will not cast out any that come to Him; who has Himself laboured, and suffered, and died for our redemption, and draws us to Him now by cords of love, in contrition and penitence. Let us then gird ourselves up to greater diligence, more deep repentance, greater earnestness in endeavouring to avoid sin and continuing in the love and favour of our God; let us strive and pray to grow in love to Him, and love to our brethren; to harbour no unloving, unforgiving thoughts, remembering how much we need forgiveness; to view all things in the light which the coming of Christ casts upon them; to esteem all things in the world as we shall esteem them then—and, whatsoever we should wish to have done at that day, to do it *now*.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING:—SPIRITUAL CONVERSE.

1 COR. xiii. 12. *For now we see through a glass,
darkly ; but then face to face.*

ONCE more before the day of our Lord's birth the Church warns us to be prepared for His coming. You have heard some weeks ago the first news of His approach, and have been gradually led on till now, when only a few days remain before we shall be celebrating His actual appearance in the flesh. You have been admonished to be watchful, lest when He comes the second time He find you sleeping; you have been taught so to live that you may look with hope for the reward which He shall then bring with Him; you have been exhorted to a holy fear of provoking His judgments or forfeiting His love. How have you been studying these lessons? Have you in any way be-

come less careless about religion? have you, do you think, made any better preparation now than you had when Advent began, for the coming of the last day? or are you still in such a condition as to be able to think of that time only with dismay? in short, are you at all more ready to see your Judge? The solemn services of this season, and the thoughts suggested by them, have produced, I trust, somewhat of this effect on some of us. Oh may the change appear in our lives! may we make God's service more of a reality, planning how we may henceforth live more religiously, sincerely trying to find out what God would have us to do, and doing it every day. We must let religion put its own colour on our daily lives: we must henceforth openly take the side of Christ: we must live more continually in the thought and love of our Saviour.

Think what the feelings should be of those who live in the expectation of seeing again, after a long absence, any one very dear to them. Do they not try to recal his features, to remember how he would look upon them, how he used to stand, or sit, or walk with them? They hold converse with him, as it were, in memory, and try to find some trace of him in every thing around them. Just so also should it be be-

tween our spirit and Christ. We should occupy ourselves with some thought of what He must be, who, though while on earth His countenance was marred more than any of the sons of men, and had no beauty that we should desire Him, is now full of grace; and such that the Church can say, "His mouth is most sweet: yea He is altogether lovely: this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." We should remember what dignity there must have been in His appearance when He drove out the buyers and sellers from the temple, and with the bare words, "I am He," caused His enemies to go backwards and fall to the ground; and what persuasion and winning power in His words when even the officers who were sent to seize Him confessed, "Never man spake as this man."

By thinking over such points as these, by tracing the features of His character, and humbly trying to copy them on to our own, we shall know better what to expect when we shall be like Him and see Him as He is. Above all, by dwelling on the thought of what He is in Himself and towards us; His infinite holiness, His infinite love.

This was the last point of our preparation—to

dwell on the thought of Christ, and of His coming, and our dwelling with Him in heaven.

Indeed for all persons, serious meditation on the second coming of our Lord is most important at this time, that they may by thinking and acting on the thought of what is unseen, overcome the effect of the world, and of what is seen. The influence of the world upon us arises from its being ever present, pressing itself upon us, speaking loudly and as it were with authority, occupying our minds and gaining our hearts. The world is seen, and because it is seen it is influential. Now we know and believe that the unseen things, heaven and hell, and our Lord and His coming, are true and real, yet unless we bring them as it were before our eyes and make them present to us, they will not influence us. You see then the importance of thinking and meditating on these great truths, lest you forget them and let them slip out of your minds. If we can spare no more time, a few minutes of steady thought every morning, on the last day, on all the dreadful signs which will come before it—the graves opening and the dead rising again, or the appearance of Christ as the Judge of all, would help us much. The putting these things before our eyes as it were by thinking of them,

and then imagining the Judge severing the righteous from the wicked, and saying the awful words, "Depart from Me, ye cursed," and ourselves standing there and awaiting our own doom: this would make us think how we should then wish to have acted, and stir us up to act so now.

But besides this, it is well for those who are, as we trust many of you are, living in the love and the fear of God, to dwell as we have said, on the thought of Christ Himself when you are now looking for Him, and watching for His return.

And there are some words in the service of this day which seem to lead us very much to this point, to this putting Christ before our eyes, even before He come as the lightning that shineth from the one part under heaven to the other. The epistle declares that the Lord is at hand, because He may come at any time, although ages may yet have to pass before His appearance. He may be nigh or He may be far in that sense. Thousands of years or a few hours are to Him the same, and we know not which it may be ere He come. But the Lord is at hand in another sense: He is ever near us indeed by His divine presence, seeing, hearing, knowing all we do, or say, or think; but especially is He

present with us His own people, since His coming in the flesh and choosing to Him a Church, which is to be His rest for ever. Here will He dwell, for He has a delight therein, so that now He is with us always, even unto the end of the world, and however much unseen, however little heeded, is still at our right hand. And this is also what the gospel for the day may teach us: "There standeth," says St. John, "One amongst you whom ye know not:" that is, if we may so apply the words to all those who have been admitted to union with Him in the Church, He is really present though we know Him not: as He said to His disciples; "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you: . . . Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me." There was a way therefore, by which though He was hidden from the world, the true disciples could behold Him after His ascension. The worldly pass to their work, the occupations of home fill all their minds, or with passing enjoyments they scarce give themselves time to think, and so they never reflect who it is that rules all this shifting of outward things, never behold the Lord who draws this veil of the visible world around Him. To them He is not manifested; they have not searched for Him,

therefore they cannot find Him; they have not loved to look upon Him, therefore He hides Himself from them. But listen to those gracious words, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

The Apostle says in the text, "Now we know in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." That is, we cannot now see all things as they are really: we only see one part of them, the outward; but there will be a time when we shall understand them more fully; we shall then be able to see what is hidden beneath them, we shall know what facts of the unseen world they shadow forth. We shall know how spirit can converse with spirit, we shall understand how the water of Baptism can bestow gifts of grace, how the bread and wine can make us partakers of His body and blood; we shall behold how Christ is using all outward means to work the purposes of His spiritual kingdom. "For now we see through a glass, darkly;" we see as it were only the reflection of the truth in a looking-glass; the truths of the inner world are pictured in those things which we can see and handle, as the substance is shadowed in a mirror: but this

is darkly, or, as the margin has it more literally, in a riddle. Now in a riddle one thing is said, and we have to find out from it what other thing is meant; so it is in the enigma of the world and of religion. Pleasure and gain and health and abundance seem at first sight to be all-important, but they are really shadows veiling the truth that real pleasure is only to be found in heaven, real gain only in religion; that health is to be thought of as a foretaste of that unflagging energy with which the sons of God shall serve Him on high, and abundance as an image of the true fulness of our heavenly Father's abode. The works of nature, the earth, the sea, the sky, are but little in themselves, but great as the impressions of God's goodness and power; the Church, and all her system of public worship, and sacraments and rites, would be nothing if she were only an outward thing belonging to this world, but as the manifestation of Christ's presence and love she is everything. She is a mirror, representing and reflecting the real substance of the worship in heaven. When Moses was taken up into the mount he saw this reality, and according to it, as his pattern, he was directed to make the tabernacle and its services; and the Christian Church is a more perfect type

of the same. Christ is the centre of all praise and worship in the temple on high, and if we ever seek that place we shall see Him face to face, but in the mean time we behold His image as exhibited in Holy Scripture, as reflected in the Church, as brought home to each one by His own indwelling Spirit; the more we study Him in them the more we shall gather of His looks; the more we know of them, the more we shall know of Him; the oftener we thus, as it were, gaze on His likeness, the more shall we be assisted to become like Himself.

And then if these things be true, if a day is coming when we must each of us look upon Him who was crucified for us; if in order to be owned by Him then, we must grow in our acquaintance with Him now, that we may follow more exactly His example; if that acquaintance cannot yet be obtained by seeing Him face to face, but only as He is revealed thus to us, oh how careful should we be diligently to use these means! how anxiously should we avoid the loss of any glimpse of Him which they may give us!

Do not imagine that in exhorting you to dwell on the thought of Christ, I am calling on you to do that which a few persons of leisure only can do. The knowledge of Christ comes to poor as

well as rich, to the labouring man as well as those who have their time free, to the man of busy active life, as well as to the retired. For the life of Christ in the Gospels, the main truths of our belief which we have learnt to say by heart, the recurring services of the Church, are free to all. All can think over these things in their minds. We must always be thinking of something, and surely these are the best things to think of; and they may be thought of by the poorest and the most simple. Few have had sweeter or brighter thoughts of Christ, than the poor working man, who has thus brought Christ ever near to him, by thinking of Him while labouring at his daily task. A few minutes in the morning thinking fixedly of Him, with a prayer for Him to help us: a few verses or a few words of Holy Scripture taken as our daily portion, to which we may recur from time to time during the day, will steady us and enable us to keep the thought of Him in our minds. It is not difficult to think of what we love, nay, our minds naturally turn to the thought of those whom we love; where the treasure is there the heart will be. Only let us be careful to join with this the *acting* on what we think, really keeping Christ with us by doing and suffering as He wills.

Are you truly desirous to see Him with joy at the last day? Do you really ever think of the feelings you will have when you are forced to behold Him? I do trust you are not altogether indifferent about that awful hour. I do hope you have turned your attention during the past weeks a little more seriously than your wont, to prepare for the sight of Him. Will you not then try to use every effort to learn and to remember what He is? that you may not be found to have mistaken His character and what He requires. And you who do think of Him in faith and love, try thus to have a greater desire for His presence. David says his eyes were weary with looking for God; so long had he been kept amidst trouble and earthly objects, that he quite longed to have some clearer view of his hidden friend whom he loved above all things. Let us learn to have some of this longing also. But not only must we have a desire to behold Him, we must, if we would thus desire Him, hearken obediently to His warnings and His invitations. They will be heard in our hearts; and we must take care to attend to them. "My heart," says the Psalmist, "hath talked of Thee: seek ye My face; Thy face Lord will I seek." "Behold," says Christ, "I stand at the door, and knock: if

any man hearken unto Me, and open, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me." Let us not disregard any such knocking at the door of our hearts as this day we have heard. Oh happy shall we be if we can attend to Him now, blessed shall we be if in public prayer and in breaking of bread He may now be known unto us ! then at the last day we shall be able to rely upon His care, and hide ourselves in the bosom of one whom we have chosen as our Saviour and our friend.

Let us remember the words of St. Peter, speaking of His and our Saviour, "Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ADVENT.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

1 COR. xi. 28. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

THERE are certain things, the want of which all serious persons confess and lament, however much they may differ as to the means through which (by God's grace) they may be restored; yet all confess that they are wanting, and that to want them (as we of this day want them) is to incur great loss, and sin, and danger. To our shame be it said, we of this day are wanting in true and uniform obedience to God, and so our walk in life (even of the better sort) is not that single and consistent Christian walk which it should be; and so we suffer loss of grace ourselves, miss of the favour of God, fall back in our spiritual race, and are an offence and scandal to others, who judge of our holy religion by the

fruits such as they see them in us, and make what we do amiss, an argument against the truths which we profess. Now I do most seriously believe that, if holiness and righteousness is to be restored to us in any full measure, it can only be by persons coming to know themselves ; their many sinful habits and tempers, their many and daily faults and short-comings, the many things which they (every day) leave undone which they ought to have done ; and the many things which they (every day) do, which they ought not to have done : there is no hope of any sure or sound progress in religion until persons come to know themselves, their own hearts, their own lives. As it is, persons go on, day by day, meeting with the same trials, and failing under them ; falling into the same sins, giving way to the same sinful habits and tempers ; and so, too often, making no progress in the religious life, no growth in grace, but rather falling back. But how are persons to attain unto this knowledge of themselves, of their lives, and of their hearts ? No doubt it can only be attained unto by the help of God ; He alone can make us to know ourselves, to see our lives as He sees them, to read the secrets of our hearts as He reads them ; His Spirit it is which alone searcheth out

all our ways, nor can we hope to do it to any profit unless His Spirit help us. But the practical question still is this: at the same time that we look to God, and depend upon God, and pray unto Him to guide us into the truth as to our real state; what means are we to use, by which we may hope to attain unto that true and real wisdom, to know ourselves? Now the answer is plain and easy, and may be given in one word—**SELF-EXAMINATION.** If any man would wish to know himself, let him examine himself. No man can hope to repent of his sins, no man can hope to break off his sinful habits and tempers, no man can hope to supply what are wanting in his daily life and duty, until he see and know them; and no man, usually, can see and know them truly unless he examine himself; so that if we would, with God's help, break off our sins, amend our lives, and cleanse our hearts, we must begin thus. We must examine ourselves, seriously and solemnly and honestly, as in the sight of the Almighty God, what we are to break off, what we are to amend, what we are to cleanse. But, alas, how few do this! how few exercise themselves in this duty, which might so keep them from sins, and set them forward on the way of holiness. If persons would do wisely, and act as in earnest,

they would examine themselves daily, they would suffer no one day to pass unquestioned. Of course they would examine themselves more fully and more solemnly before seasons of Holy Communion, as St. Paul charges all persons in the text: of course they would be more full and careful at such seasons. And, again, on a sick bed, (when they had much leisure, and when the chastening hand of God was laid upon them, and when they knew not how near death and judgment might be,) they would endeavour to examine all their lives past, to call to mind all the sins of childhood, youth, and manhood; days misspent, duties left undone, talents buried in the earth, means of grace abused to evil; all such they would then be careful to call to mind; that so confessing their sins unto God, and repenting truly of them, their sins might be done away by His mercy, and their pardon sealed in heaven, before they go hence and be no more seen. Thus all serious persons would examine themselves more fully and solemnly at seasons of Holy Communion or of sickness; when about to partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, or when about to pass, they know not how soon, before His awful judgment-seat. But of this also I am sure, that persons would do well (as

they value their souls) not to put off all self-examination unto such seasons ; not even unto seasons of Holy Communion, much less unto seasons of sickness. We rarely do well, or to any purpose, what we do but seldom ; and this holds true in matters of religion much more than we usually think. No doubt it is the grace of God which “worketh in us both to will and to do” what is good ; whatever we do must begin and end in Him ; from first to last He alone upholds us : still it is no less true that, as our duties become more easy and pleasant to us by use, so are we enabled to discharge them better. They who have been careful and regular in prayer during many years, not only find the duty of prayer more pleasant and easy to them, but also, no doubt, have greater power to pray, and pray better, than they to whom it is a new and untried task. No doubt they are able to set God more fully before them, to exercise more self-command and self-control, to repress wandering thoughts, and to withdraw more entirely from the cares and pleasures of life into the sanctuary of God. And what is true of prayer, is true also of other religious exercises and duties ; and (as one would think) in an especial manner of this exercise and duty of self-examination. If per-

sons have not been used to examine themselves often or daily, how can they hope to be able to examine themselves, as they ought, now and then, before seasons of Holy Communion, or, (it may be,) once for all in a season of sickness? and yet, unless they do examine themselves fully then, how can they hope to see their many and great sins? and, unless they do see them, how can they hope to repent of them? and, unless they do repent of them, how can they hope to have them forgiven? So that, through want of strict and careful self-examination, persons are in danger of coming to Holy Communion with sins upon them unrepented and unforgiven; and (what is a still more serious matter) of passing out of life in this state, of dying without having come to see and know their sins, until they come to stand before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ; when, indeed, they must know them all, but when, alas, it is too late to repent and pray for forgiveness. When persons have used themselves to self-examination daily, then no doubt it is of great use to examine themselves more fully and solemnly at seasons of Holy Communion, or (again) at times of sickness, because they have learned by use how to set about it; they have not suffered their sins to pass by unheeded; they have not allowed their

sense of sin to become blunted ; but they have striven to keep their conscience keen and their hearts tender.

For this is among the blessed fruits to be looked for from daily self-examination ; that we shall not go on in sin without a warning voice from within us. We shall not grow hardened or careless ; we shall not think it enough (as too many do) to keep from gross and open sin ; but we shall learn the exceeding sinfulness of all sin, and the exceeding weakness and deceitfulness of our own hearts. We shall learn, by what takes place in ourselves, that many sins which we thought little of are really great and serious sins against Almighty God ; we shall learn the great evil of sinful habits and tempers, such as sloth, discontent, sullenness, anger, self-indulgence, which men may live on in whole years and yet hardly be aware of. We shall learn how wrong it is, and how contrary to our Christian profession, to judge harshly of others, to say unkind things of others, to dwell upon the faults of others ; and we shall learn this further, (which is a most serious and solemn lesson,) that we have in ourselves the seeds of very many of the worst sins which we see and condemn in others ; that it is (not of ourselves, but) of God that we have

not fallen into grievous sins ; that if we are not grievous and wilful sinners in deed, it is only because His grace hath withheld us, and His providence hath not suffered us to be placed in circumstances of severe trial, where we might have fallen even as others. And so we shall learn, in our own case, not to think highly of ourselves, not to thank God (in a spirit of pride) that we are not as other men ; but to be humbled by those seeds of evil which we find within us, and to remember that, in our case, a thought of evil may be as sinful as a deed of evil in another ; that an impure desire in us may be as sinful as an act of uncleanness in another ; that for us to covet the goods of another, may be all one as if another man should steal ; for us to hate our brother, may be all one as if another (less favoured than ourselves) should murder.

What then is meant by self-examination daily ? it is this. That persons would be careful some one time every day, to ask themselves a few plain and easy questions as to their daily life and temper. Perhaps all persons may not be able to do this at one and the same time ; but when it is in our power to choose and we have leisure, the evening would seem the most natural and fitting time, when the business of the day is over, and

we are about to pray to God to keep us safe through the perils and dangers of the darkness. This would seem the most natural and fitting time to commune with our own heart, to place ourselves (as it were) in the presence of Almighty God, and to ask ourselves fairly and honestly such questions as may help us to see what we have done amiss in the day past, what sins we are to repent of, to confess, and to ask pardon for from God.

Supposing then a person to wish to examine himself before he kneels down to pray at night, what are the sort of questions which he should ask himself? Now, one cannot hope to lay down such questions as would suit all, still it may be no hard matter to lay down some which would suit most persons. They are then, in general, such as these. "Have I been careful to say my prayers slowly and quietly both last evening and this morning? Have I been careful not to suffer my mind to wander at my prayers? Have I been careful (some time of the day) to read Holy Scripture? Have I read it in a teachable spirit, and applied what I read to my own guidance in life? Have I tried to bear in mind through the day that God sees me, and have I done all things as in His presence?"

Have I broken any one of God's commandments in thought, word, or deed? Have I done any thing which I ought not to have done, or have I left undone any thing which I ought to have done? i. e. Is there any known sin into which I have suffered myself to fall, any known duty which I have suffered myself to leave undone? Have I given way to any sinful habit or temper: such as sloth, self-indulgence, envy, malice, anger, sullenness, discontent, covetousness? Have I kept from all approach to sins of uncleanness and excess in meat or in drink? Have I, with God's help, gained the better of my besetting sin, whatever that may be?" No doubt persons who should examine themselves strictly, would ask themselves other questions suited to their several states: and on the evening of the Lord's day, or of other holy days, they would add questions suited to the special duties of the day. "Whether they have been careful to go to the church? Whether they have been devout and serious in the church? Whether they have hallowed the whole day by keeping from all unnecessary work, and from all vain amusements?" But the questions which I have given above are suited to all men, and all days: and such as all may use with profit; because they refer to sins

into which all men are liable to fall every day ; to duties which all men are bound to discharge all the days of their lives. If we would but begin daily with these or such as these, we should be led to add others as we needed them ; as we come to see more of our duty, and of our own weakness and sinfulness. If we would but begin with these, (or even fewer than these,) and go on every day ; not doing it now and then ; not going on for a few days, and (then) giving over, but setting ourselves to it daily, as to a great daily business ; and suffering no one day to pass on which we leave it undone.

My brethren, you well know that it is the duty of all persons, at times of Holy Communion, to examine themselves with more than common care and strictness, that so they may "eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." And I know of no way so suited to fit you to examine yourselves as you ought, at such times, as for you to learn and use yourselves to examine yourselves every day : you may be sure of this, that daily self-examination is the best preparation for sacramental self-examination. Try and prove your ownelves, your own lives, your own hearts, every day ; and then you will be able to do so more fully, and to more purpose, at seasons of Holy Communion. It is indeed

my earnest wish and prayer that many, who come seldom to Holy Communion, would come often ; that many who come not at all, would come : but I do not wish, I have never wished, God forbid, that any should come unprepared : rather I would warn them against the sin and danger of such conduct ; at the same time that I warn them plainly and solemnly of the sore loss, and heavy sin, and great danger, of keeping away year by year from the table of the Lord. What I would say is this. Put away all known and wilful sins : break off all sinful and evil habits and tempers : exercise true repentance for what is past : form stedfast purposes for the future : set yourselves in earnest to discharge the duties of your calling : be careful to set apart times for private prayer, for meditation, for reading the Word of God : and (that you may learn your true state : what sins yet beset you : what evil tempers yet remain : what duties are still left undone) examine yourselves daily, “not lightly and after the manner of dissemblers with God,” but seriously, fairly, and honestly, as set in the presence of Almighty God now, and as one day about to stand before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

SHARE WITH CHRIST IN HOLINESS AND GLADNESS.

HEB. i. 9. *Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.*

HEIR to a rich property ; long wished and prayed for by loyal hearts ; beautiful even above all other children ; object of his parents' singular love :—with what honour and attention would such a son be welcomed into the world. The richest dresses, the most careful tending, costly rejoicings, visits of many an acquaintance, would not seem more than his due : all that wealth could procure or affection suggest would be prepared for the day of his birth.

We celebrate to-day the birth of one greater than any such a son. Heir of all the worlds ; the desire of all nations ; fairer than the children of men ; the well-beloved of the Father ; our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself the mighty God, was as on

this day born into the world: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder." "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." But all unsuited to His high estate is the scene on which His infant eyes have opened: there are no rich robes for Him, but common swaddling clothes; He has no careful tending, but is thrust out into a stable; there are no costly rejoicings, no gathering of His parents' friends: but "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." "He is despised and rejected of men." There were not wanting indeed signs of His real greatness. A multitude of the heavenly host was heard rejoicing in the stillness of night. His star was seen in the east. Shepherds came to see and worship Him. But still He was also what He seemed, a poor helpless babe, disregarded by the world, born to a life of want, and toil, and suffering. Really in poverty, yet as really born to enrich the world; seemingly helpless, yet coming as the Saviour of mankind; disregarded, yet hereafter to be the pattern studied of all men; destined to want and labour and suffer, and yet by those very means to win all power in heaven and in earth: He seems to

fill us with perplexity by such apparent contradictions. Nor are we to seek an explanation of them in the fact, that though outwardly so mean He was also the most high God. We do indeed know that such was the case. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,"—"and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us:" and we have this morning confessed it as part of the Catholic Faith, that "our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God is God and Man, . . . of the substance of the Father, . . . begotten before the worlds, . . . perfect God, . . . equal to the Father." But this, though it be necessary indeed to salvation to believe it, does not account for the apparent inconsistency between the meanness of our Saviour's birth and the high exaltation to which He was destined. For the Godhead He never laid aside. He did not abdicate His throne in heaven in order to fill that manger in Bethlehem. His divine nature could not change; as it can never be lowered, so neither can it ever be raised. The change from seeming poverty and contempt, to the fullness of power and glory, was wholly in His human nature. It was as man that He was as on this day born in great humility; it is as man that He is now exalted far above every name;

it will be as man that on the judgment day He will come in the glory of the Father. St. Paul recognises this distinction very plainly in the passage chosen for this morning's epistle. Proving to the Hebrews from the words of David in the forty-fifth psalm, the great and cardinal doctrine I have asserted; he first shews that Jesus was God, the sovereign of the universe: "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom;" and then he goes on with the quotation to shew that He is also man, and as man exalted above all. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." As God, who could be fellows with Him? To whom will ye compare Me and make Me equal, saith the Lord? But as man, He is not ashamed to call us all His brethren: therefore another reason for His anointing is assigned, not because He was already decked with majesty and honour, but because of His perfect innocence, His complete obedience as the Son of man: Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God hath anointed Thee. The humiliation of the Son of God to take upon Him our flesh, the Incarna-

tion, was indeed an astonishing instance of His love for us, but strictly speaking it is not that event which we this day commemorate. We celebrate it rather upon Lady-day, when at the message of the angel Gabriel the blessed Virgin conceived Him in her womb. To-day we celebrate His birth, the first step in that life of perfect holiness by which as man He scaled the heavens. It is one thing for the Son of God to have joined to Himself the nature of man; it is another to have subjected Himself to poverty and contempt and suffering and temptation, in order that being found perfect He might be anointed with the oil of gladness. He might have effected the one had He been born manifestly as universal sovereign, the angels of God and the kings of the earth being gathered to do honour to His Nativity; He could not, it would seem, complete the other, unless through much tribulation He entered into the kingdom of heaven.

Such then is the event the Church celebrates to-day: the beginning of that life of loving righteousness and hating iniquity, which has raised mankind to be heirs of immortality. The babe whose birth is this day proclaimed to us, was of one and the same nature with us all: not of a nature similar or corresponding with ours, but

of the same nature. As He actually took unto Himself our flesh and became of our nature, by being made out of the Virgin Mary's substance, so each of us by deriving our nature from the substance of our parents, is joined as He was to the common stock. Adam's race has indeed multiplied and replenished the earth, but still it is one originally. As then in Adam we all fell, so in Christ we all are raised again. His life of humility has led Him to an eternity of glory. In His exaltation, therefore, we are to be exalted, in His gladness we are to be glad. He is the first-born of many sons to God, we make up the family : He is the first-fruits stored already in God's garner, we are the after harvest, waiting each our time, as one by one we are gathered in : He is anointed with the oil of gladness as head over all, we at the borders of the robe, at the feet of the one anointed body, receive of the overflowing unction.

We shall not, however, at all understand this, nor acknowledge our duty in consequence, till we learn what that gladness is, in which we are thus allowed to share. It is not the gladness of worldly prosperity, for it has been said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" it is not the happiness of earthly affection and sympathy, for we are told,

“Marvel not if the world hate you;” it is not the pleasures of a peaceful home, for we know “The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” We may be in the lowest no less than in the highest rank, we may be far from relations and friends, have neither father nor mother, nor house to rest in; but yet partake of His gladness. We may have the assurance of a clear conscience; the blessed sense of being at peace with God, the glad satisfaction, however the world may revile us, that we have refrained our feet from every evil way, and with our whole heart have sought unto God. So we might join, not in a murmuring but in a confiding spirit, in the grand but affecting words of a Bishop in former days: “I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile.” Not in exile as children of God, not in exile from our real home, for the whole world is our Father’s, and we are co-heirs with Christ. If we are in truth sons of the Most High, if we have set our love upon Him, we cannot be in banishment or gloom; but our rejoicings on this day’s festival will be but faint representations of the gladness our Redeemer has bought for us. “Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one goeth

with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel. The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

It is the gladness of God's Holy Spirit; the gladness of being at one with our Lord; the confidence of having, though with many a deficiency, yet striven honestly and with a sincere affection to make ourselves perfect, that we are to expect as our reward. And therefore it is that in order to share in it we must try to love what Christ loves, to hate only what is hateful before Him.

We are now about to draw near and partake, by a mysterious communion, of His flesh and blood, to be spiritually joined to Him. Holy Communion is the way by which our sinful bodies are made clean by His body, and our souls washed by His most precious blood; by which Christ, the Lord Almighty, very God and very man, is made to dwell in us and we in Him. This feast it is which is the essence, the centre, the heart of a Christian festival, and therefore ever ordered to be celebrated as a festival by the Church. If then we would really

not lose the chief part of our joy, if we would have the gladness of being united with our Saviour, of being assured of His good-will and favour towards us, and that we are very members incorporate in His mystical body, and heirs through hope of His everlasting kingdom, we must take care that we are in reality both loving righteousness and hating iniquity. It is comparatively easy to persuade ourselves that we do the one or other of these separately, not so easy to know that we are doing both.

How many will deceive themselves by thinking that they are fit to come before God, because there are some sins which they see others commit, and which they themselves detest. One who revolts at blasphemy, who abominates lying, who dreads dishonesty, whose modesty starts from impurity, whose good feeling is strong against intemperance or other excess, may yet be quite a stranger to the gladness we speak of, because he is no lover of righteousness. Self-denial, alms-giving for Christ's sake, patience, humility, obedience, brotherly love, zeal for the truth, daily desires to promote God's glory, these are matters perhaps scarcely thought of, still less heartily understood, not at all believed. Such persons, for the most part, limit their thoughts to themselves; vice

would derogate from their own honour, would spoil their own fame, therefore they hate it; and not because it is an abomination in the sight of God.

On the other hand, how very many live on year after year deluding themselves with visions of peace, clouded indeed with an obscuring mist, but yet seemingly real, because they think they love righteousness and yet hate not iniquity. They love their religion well, they desire to be devout, they enjoy being occupied with works of mercy; but withal there are certain failings, or faults, (or, it may be, even deadly sins,) which are so sweet to them that they will not forego their commission, almost as often as the temptation to them rushes in upon them. They love well to be religious when there is nothing to make them wicked; but when their pride is injured they think it noble to shew resentment: when they are ridiculed they do not restrain their lips from a sharp retort: when they are tempted to lust, to covetousness, to sloth, to any departure from God, they yield to the temptation, and while they think they are heavenly they are still of this world. The deceiving light of seeming godliness shines but in half their character at a time, while the other half remains in darkness.

It is for us then to join both these really together, to love righteousness, and to hate iniquity, to put off the old man and to put on the new, to put on Jesus Christ. I trust, my brethren, that you have sought out your sins and failings, and have already acknowledged them before God before coming hither to Holy Communion. I may suppose that you have discovered some faults you especially labour under, some virtues you are yet lacking, some of the Christian graces you are yet deficient in; make then this season a time for imploring God's help, and using your own best exertions to conquer those faults, and to increase in those graces: use the opportunity now before you, when you hope indeed to receive the Lord Jesus to dwell with you, to entreat Him to quench within you all love of sin, and to kindle in its place fresh desires after holiness. Aspire to be united to Him. Remember how He as on this day was born in the flesh, and has given Himself in that flesh for you, and then your sins may be, as you are about to say they are, grievous unto you, for it is they alone that can separate you from Him, and your desire ever hereafter to serve and please Him in newness of life, will be not only in words but in the depth of your affection.

Oh with what new joy may you go on your way, having Him in such wise ever at your side ; with what delight, even in the extremity of sickness, of poverty, or loneliness, may you feel that He abides with you ; with what confidence may you look on to the day when the Psalmist's words shall apply not only to Christ the head, but to you, now perchance one of His humblest members : " Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows ! "

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

CHRISTMAS DAY. No. II.

TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

ST. LUKE ii. 10. *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

“Good tidings of great joy,” such was the message of the angel on the morning of this blessed day, and such is the message which, prolonged through eighteen hundred years, the Church conveys to us to-day. Good tidings of great joy. The winter is closed in upon us with its severe weather, and its cold winds and rain, and the brightness of the earth and sky is past, and all that seems most pleasant and most cheerful, and the dark cheerless gloomy days are come; and yet it is at this season most especially that the heart of the Christian is filled with joy; it is in the midst of these dark and gloomy days that the Church lifts up her voice, and sends her ‘messengers’ whose feet upon

the mountains are beautiful, to bring us "glad tidings of great joy."

And what are these tidings of so great joy, that none but an angel's tongue might tell? They are "that to us is born in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Surely there is no joy in the world equal to the being saved; no joy so great; no news so welcome as to one ready to perish to hear of one that will save him. To one sick and ill, what joy so great as to hear of a physician that will make him well? To one condemned to die, what joy so great as to hear of one that will procure him pardon? To one taken captive by his enemies, what joy so great as to hear of one that will set him free? But there is another life beside the life of the body, not to be forgotten; and another death, and greater dangers to be avoided, and worse enemies to be feared. It would be well if we remembered them more.

Besides these bodies of ours, a soul we each have, which has much need of a Saviour, a soul that lives for ever, and a second death, the living death in hell. And an enemy we have which is Satan, and a danger which is sin. Sin it is which would destroy us wholly, and there is no person in the world has so much need of a Saviour as a

sinner. Nothing so dangerous, nothing so deadly to us as sin, whatever account we make of it.

From it comes all the evil in this life, and all the evil of the life to come; in comparison of which the evils here are not worth the speaking of; above all then, we need a Saviour for our souls and from our sins, and from the everlasting destruction which sin will bring upon us in the next life, a life and a death not far from any of us, not far from him who thinks it farthest off. If then it be good tidings to hear of a Saviour where it is but a matter of the loss of earth, or of this life here, how much more when it comes to the loss of heaven and to the danger of hell, when our soul is at stake, and our misery or our happiness for ever!

He that could save our souls from that destroyer, were not the birth of such a one good news? Is not the hearing of such a Saviour good tidings?

Oh, if we had but that sense of our souls which we have of our bodies; if we had that fear of our ghostly enemies, and that lively apprehension of the eternal torments of that place, and how near we are to it, nothing between us but this poor breath in our nostrils; if we had but the same feeling of our sins which we

have of our sickness and bodily ailments ; if we had this, I say, with how great gladness should we hear the tidings of this day, and hold the birth of such a Saviour a joy indeed ! How should we think it a tidings beyond an angel's voice to tell, that to us is born this day a Saviour which is Christ the Lord !

At other seasons of the year Christ comes to us, but then it is in ways very different from that in which He comes now,—in His miracles, in anguish, in suffering, in robes dyed red from Bozrah, and in garments rolled in blood. But now He comes in garments white as snow, and angel hosts attend Him on His way, and their song is peace.

At other seasons of the year we are reminded of toil and suffering, we are told of temptation, of fasting, of mortification, of working out our salvation with fear and trembling. But at this season we are simply reminded of God's gifts and free mercy to us, that "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

It was in anticipation of the mercies and salvation of this day, that the prophets spoke in all their most glorious strains : "Sing, O ye heavens ; for the Lord hath done it : shout, ye lower parts

of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."

It was of the mercies of this day, that the Lord Himself spoke where He said that "many prophets and righteous men had desired to see the things which ye see and had not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear and had not heard them."

We are so much accustomed (blessed be God) to hear from infancy of the Incarnation of the Son of God, of His taking our nature upon Him, of His being born of a Virgin, that unless we take pains to impress upon our minds what this means, we are in great danger of forgetting the surpassing greatness of God's love and condescension therein conveyed. And therefore has God through His Church ordained this day, a day especially of joy and gladness, in addition to our weekly festival of the Lord's day, in order that through God's mercy this great and all-important truth may be rightly impressed upon our minds. Do not make it, my brethren, a day of mere carnal festivity and rejoicing, but strive to realize to yourselves that salvation which He has wrought for you by His humiliation on this day.

The Incarnation is the hinge of all our faith, the root from which it all springs; your right faith here, and accordingly your salvation hereafter, depends upon your realizing this great truth, the tidings of great joy which the angel brought to-day. And accordingly this season has been always made in the Church a time of especial joyfulness and thanksgiving, a time of prayer and praise and holy Communion.

It is a time when families meet together, when those who are at other times separated by the duties and business of life, endeavour to meet in one for a little while. And surely a most fitting season this for such a meeting. How good is it to many of us thus to recal the purer and better joys of our childhood and of our home.

Let us endeavour so to meet in peace, and love, and especially at the holy Communion, that, through the merits of our redeeming Lord, we may hope to meet together hereafter in heaven. It is a good thing also at such a time, to recal some sobering and affectionate recollections of those who would have joined our family circle and are not; it is a time also when our table is spread with more abundant cheer than at other times, and right that it should be; for if at any time

it be permitted to sinners freely to partake of the good gifts of God, now surely is the time ; only let us take these things as God's gifts to us. Let there be no excess of eating or drinking, lest we make the grace of God an occasion of sin. And if we would hallow those temporal gifts to our use, above all let us remember the poor, let us impart to them some portions of those good things which God has freely given to us, that they too may rejoice with us on this glad day of our Lord's birth.

And further, if there be among us any quarrellings and dissensions, any enmity and strife ; now let us make it up, let us ask and grant forgiveness, and the right hand of fellowship, of peace ; for this day the Prince of peace is born.

And lastly, let us prepare a place in our hearts where He who was laid in a manger may find a place to rest.

It was not in the palaces of the great, nor in the houses of the rich, that He was pleased to be laid, but in a poor manger.

It is not in the proud heart that is lifted up, nor in the worldly covetous heart, but with the humble and the meek, with the contrite and lowly spirit, that Jesus will find His dwelling still.

But chiefly are we bound at this season to fill our hearts with admiration of the wonderful love of God to us, and in celebrating the holy Communion to render unto God all praises and adoration for this stupendous instance of His love, because He did give His only-begotten Son, as at this time to be born for us, and that without spot or sin, to make us clean from all sin.

Let us then give diligence at this season to cleanse our own hearts, to cherish the spirit of love, to be merciful to the poor, and to live in charity with our neighbours; and thus to offer ourselves up to God at His holy table. And the echo of that angel's voice shall be heard again in our hearts "that to us is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HEZEKIAH.

ISAIAH xxxviii. 17. *Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.*

ONE of the great uses of the Old Testament is that it reveals to us how intimately God is concerned in what we call the events of every-day life. It removes the veil of outward instruments and apparently chance occurrences, and shews us the real causes and the real guide and designer of all things. The Bible is a divine history; it is the account of what has happened as told by Him who knows everything, the most deep and secret springs of all events. In this it differs from all the other histories that you read: in that it tells us what has happened, as it is viewed by God, and as it appears to His holy angels. It gives you God's judgment of men and things; it shews you how He regards them,

especially it reveals those secret workings which are known only to Him. We think it much to hear a narrative of an event from one who was concerned in it, and acquainted with its innermost circumstances. How do the men of the world value the secret history of some great political movement, when the real agents, their various courses, their designs, their schemes and cross schemes are laid open, and the mystery which involved it, the contradictions which appeared in the common accounts, are all cleared up. Or, again, when some one lays open to you the hidden causes of the wonders of nature, when he explains the simple laws according to which the sun and moon are eclipsed, the thunder rolls, or the electric power carries messages many hundred miles in a moment, you are delighted at having learnt the true but secret causes of what you see. Now this is what the Bible does as regards the events of human life and the movements of the world; it lays open the true causes of them, and clears up much that would otherwise be a mystery. It is the light of all other history; it exhibits the great Controller of all things; and when we are looking to man, and chance, and nature, it teaches us that it is God who is the hidden mover—that it is His hand

which guides the machine of the world and of society, and brings things to pass with us, of which if they cross us we give the blame to others, and if they please us we take the praise to ourselves. The Old Testament history shews us that all these things, whether they appear good to us or evil, come alike from One who ordereth all things sweetly, and maketh them work together for good.

This is especially the case with the account which the lessons read to-day give us of the life of Hezekiah. We there see how the common event of a dangerous sickness was ordained by God; how that sickness was removed because the sufferer repented and prayed; how a particular remedy, a lump of figs laid upon the boil, was blessed with the power of restoring the king to life; in short, throughout the whole history the secret springs that produced effects which we see every day around us are laid bare, and they are exhibited as depending altogether upon the power and the will of the Almighty. The text seems to contain Hezekiah's acknowledgement, that all that had happened to him came from God, and to assign some of the reasons why God thus deals with His servants. Let us see what we may gather from it.

1. First of all the king says, "For peace I had great bitterness," or, as the margin of our Bible has it, "upon my peace came great bitterness." The kingdom of Judah, over which Hezekiah was placed, had indeed lost much of the splendour that belonged to it under the reign of Solomon. It was now separated from the ten tribes, an enemy was at its borders without, and there was corruption among its people within. But yet Hezekiah seems to have lived emphatically in peace. He had restored something of the true worship of Jehovah, he had celebrated the pass-over with something of its ancient glory, with sacrifices in abundance, and rejoicings among the people. "In every work," says the sacred historian, "that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered." "He had," as we read in another place, "exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold and precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; store-houses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in

abundance ; for God had given him substance very much. And he prospered in all his works." But lest all this should tempt him to say with the rich fool in the parable, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry ;" a great bitterness, or calamity, he says, was sent upon him ; he fell sick—sick unto death, so that all these his treasures had to be abandoned, and instead of arranging his armoury and his jewel house, he was bid to look nearer home, to set his own house in order, for he should die and not live. Then it was that he turned away his face ; as he lay upon his bed with Isaiah and his servants about him, he "turned his face toward the wall and prayed." And God heard his supplication : He sent a message that he should yet live fifteen years ; He delivered his soul, as he says in the text, "from the pit of corruption." God allowed him a little while longer to lay up treasures in heaven, He granted him a few years more upon earth to profit by the worship in the temple, he was reprieved for a short space, that he might teach his children and subjects the power of the Almighty, and say with the Psalmist, "Come ye children and hearken unto me, I will tell you what God hath done for my soul."

2. But secondly, what was the cause which Hezekiah assigned for this goodness of God? "Thou hast in *love for my soul*," he says, "delivered it from the pit of corruption." It was not because the Allwise repented of His resolution—it was not because it was a vexation and sorrow to His servant to leave this world, it was not even because He wished to exhibit His power to all the nations, but it was love for that one soul, which He beheld praying before Him. When we look at the infinite number and importance of all the rest of God's works, when we remember the thousands and tens of thousands of angels who depend on Him; when we behold the sun, the moon, and the stars, which He has ordained, we might fancy that the whole of this world were too little to be of any real interest to the Creator; how much less then could we think that that little portion of this earth, man and his works, would concern Him? What then must be our admiration when we find not only this universe, not only the whole race of mankind, nor even one chosen and peculiar people the object of God's care, but the soul of one individual man the object of His love. Does not this shew us that however careless a man may have been of his own salvation, however heedless whether

his soul perish or live for ever in joy, God takes more thought for us even than we do for ourselves? Oh, what marvellous goodness and love in our Maker; that He should interfere for that upon which we ourselves bestow no labour—that He, the author and possessor of all that is good, should reckon precious what we, weak creatures and dependant on others for all things, almost despise, and often altogether forget. “Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?”

3. And thirdly, what is the great benefit Hezekiah declares he had obtained from God through this sickness? He thanked Him, not because he was restored to the enjoyment of his health and possessions, not because he had yet so many months to be a king, but because he was recalled to repentance, because he was warned to be no longer a sinner, because he had obtained pardon for his iniquities; “for Thou,” he exclaims, “for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.” He had been brought up to walk before the Lord, he had been taught since he was a boy to feel that out of God’s favour there was no real pleasure, and so when his pride had for awhile estranged him from the Almighty, when amidst prosperity and flattery he had for-

gotten somewhat of his earlier and holier feelings, nothing gave him such a blessed joy as this, that that unkindly dream had as it were been scared away, that the spell with which the world had fascinated his soul was broken, and that he had once more come round to feel as in the days of old, had once more been reconciled with Heaven, had once more set his delight upon eternal things, could once more say with truth to His heavenly Father, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee."

Now all of us, though we have no prophet to tell us so, are dealt with by God in the same way that Hezekiah was so mercifully treated.

The soul of each one of us knoweth its own bitterness. While all men about us think that we are filled with happiness to the full, while we wear a cheerful look and force ourselves to speak gently, and kindly, and pleasantly to all, yet within, how many of us carry about with us a real death, how many of us have sorrows which we would not tell for the whole world, lest they should meet with an unkind or an unsympathizing answer. It may be, that amidst our active employments we have that weakness of body and tender health, that makes it hard for us to continue on

our way, and desirous rather that our long day's work were done, and we could lay us down and take our eternal rest. It may be, that from the unkindness or the sins of our relations, we are left lonely in the world, and though we find careful friends and pleasant companions, yet we feel the want of such as are bound by actual ties to love us. It may be, that the members of our family have brought disgrace upon us, or distress us with their ungodly ways, or foolish practices, or rough dispositions, so that we would willingly join the Psalmist and say, "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest." It may be, that the thoughts of those whom God has taken from us, occasion us continual sorrow; and that when we would otherwise take pleasure in the harmless delights of life, their form comes across us and throws a shadow nothing on earth can relieve. Ten thousands of such kinds of bitterness are the lot of men in this life.

And now how do we take all these? from whom do we persuade ourselves that they come? Do we acknowledge that it is God who has so ordered our fortunes, that these thorns in the flesh should still stick by us? Let us ask ourselves for what purpose He thus deals with us,

let us seek wherefore He thus contendeth with us. Is there not some little hankering after the things of this world, is there not some turning towards an earthly good, some resting upon the imaginations of our own hearts? Shall we then murmur because God would draw us from these things, shall we fret and chafe, and try to defeat the workings of our Lord, or slip from the loving guidance of His hand? Let us rather set ourselves to come to Him, who thus warns us of His care and continual presence. Every sorrow that we have, let us reckon it a link to heaven. Every distress that comes upon us, let us call it a messenger from the Most High. Every crossing of our will, let us bless it as the woundings in order to heal, and the strokes of an amending rod, as the touches of a healing hand.

And surely the certainty that God still loveth our soul, should move us to a greater care for it. If for our own sakes we are not afraid to sin, if we dread not eternal torment, and care not for eternal pleasures, yet, if we have one good feeling left, we shall not suffer the love of the great and Almighty God, who has so many nobler creatures He might take delight in, to be wasted upon us. Let us at last determine to set our house within us in order.

This time especially calls on us to do so; for it is a marked point in our life. That life, you know, is like a journey: and in that journey the end of a year is as it were a milestone, at which the traveller stops, and considers how much of his journey he has already gone over, how far he has yet to go, and how long a time is left to do it in. Each month's, each week's end, and indeed the close of every day, is a call to thoughtful persons to consider how time passes away from them, and what progress they have made; but to too many persons these go by like the trees and houses they pass by the road side,—but a year's end calls every one to think—there are few who are not roused by it to some consideration of their condition. The Church at this time repeats the warning words, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live!" and calls us to attend. Let us act like sensible and reasonable beings. Let us not go on year after year without any thought of the great end and business of our lives. It is not the part of a reasonable man to live at all hazards, without any care or thought: it is, you know, in things of this life, mere ruin, soon bringing a person to utter poverty: and if in things of this world, carelessness and thoughtlessness are attended by such

serious consequences, may we not fear that they will still more be so with regard to our interest in another world, and in the concerns of our souls? Let us not neglect this warning. God on the prayer of Hezekiah lengthened his life fifteen years; are we sure that He will lengthen ours by one year? That He will let the tree that bears no fruit alone for this year also? Let us turn to Him at once. We may not be like Hezekiah and obtain a respite. Let us not then prefer our relations, our homes, our work, our pleasures, our sins, as we now do, to our souls and our God, but resolve from henceforth, so to live every day, so to apply our hearts to know what God would have us to do, that He may now for Christ's sake cast all our sins behind His back, and at the last receive us into that life, "where there is no more sickness, no more bitterness, no more sorrow nor crying, for the former things are passed away."

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

DILIGENT PRAYER.

ISAIAH xliii. 23. *But thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob ; but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel.*

WE *profess* to take the Bible as our rule of faith and practice ; and yet it is to be feared that few persons do so in earnest ; the most part of persons take just so much as falls in with their own feeling or fancy, and leave out all that offends and displeases them ; very few persons indeed take to themselves the whole Bible in its fulness and strictness ; they say that such and such parts do not apply to them, or to this day ; that times are changed ; that what was a plain duty *once* is no duty *now*. Now all this is wrong and dangerous, specially whenever we apply it to plain matters of duty, to exercises of devotion, or to means of pleasing God, whereby God's saints in former times found favour and were accepted with Him : in all such matters we are only too much tempted to take up with what seems easy and pleasant, and to

put away whatever calls for labour, self-control, and self-denial. And here let us remember, that "strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life," that we are to be disciples of a crucified Saviour, that we have been signed with the sign of His cross, and that He Himself has said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me;" so that we have good reason to suspect every way which men use to put such senses upon holy Scripture as do but explain away its real deep and solemn meaning, and take from the strictness of that religion which we profess: and here I will instance in one matter, the matter of prayer.

I do not think that persons usually consider how much is said of the duty of frequent prayer, or how much the true saints and servants of God exercised themselves in this duty. And, to make what I say more plain, I will not speak of common prayer here in the church, (which yet is slighted by only too many, even on the Lord's day; and by nearly all on other days, however holy,) but I will speak of private prayer, which all persons who are in any measure serious in religion, allow to be a great and paramount duty: and I will say plainly that

I fear that very few persons discharge this duty as they ought; very few persons pray so often as they ought; very few persons pray so seriously as they ought; or set apart out of their day regular seasons for prayer, so as to ensure quiet and orderly exercises of devotion. What I fear is *this*, that there are many who only pray to God in the evening and not in the morning, as if we did not need the grace of God every day to keep us from sin and danger, and as if we did not need to pray for it; as if it were any safer to go out to our work and labour of the day without having asked help from God, than it is to lie down at night without having confessed our sins to God, and prayed for His forgiveness; *this* I fear is the case of many, that they pray to God only in the evening, and not at all in the morning. Again, I fear this further, that of those who usually pray to God *both* morning and evening, too many, at times, leave their prayers unsaid, either when they are late and hurried in the morning, or when they are tired and sleepy at night: and do not consider how great herein is their loss and sin and danger; to begin the day without prayer for the grace of God, to go forth to their work and their labour without having asked God's blessing: or

to lie down to rest without having confessed their sins, and prayed for forgiveness, and without having commended their souls and bodies to the sure care of Almighty God through the hours of darkness, that by His great mercy He may defend them from all perils and dangers of the night.

Now do such persons remember what solemn words are spoken in holy Scripture of the duty of diligent prayer? as when St. Paul charges the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing,” and to the Romans, “continuing instant in prayer,” and to the Ephesians, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints,” and to the Colossians, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving:” and St. Peter, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer:” and our blessed Lord Himself, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always.” Now do persons usually consider what these and such other sentences of holy Scripture teach, how plain they make the duty of prayer, serious and solemn and earnest prayer, not now and then when we feel so disposed, but *so very often* as that (in some sense) we are to

pray always, without ceasing, to continue instant in prayer, to be sober, and watch thereunto with all perseverance. Whether or no we take these words in the letter, *this* at any rate is plain, that they make prayer a grave and solemn matter, or serious business of life: not what we are to do now and then; take up and lay down, as we will; hurry over or leave undone when we are tired or pressed for time: but a solemn duty to God which we cannot leave undone without sin: a serious business for which we must find or make time, let what will happen in consequence.

This, I say, is *the very least* which these sentences of holy Scripture teach. Indeed they teach much more than this, that there is a true and real sense in which the *whole* life of the Christian is to be (as it were) a continual prayer to God, a continual approach to Him, a continual lifting up of the heart to Him. But I will not now dwell on this, I will rather press upon you what is *the very least* such sentences of holy Scripture can mean: and how much greater and more serious is the duty of prayer which they teach, than what men in general are disposed to practise. Would that men would resolve to set apart *full* time morning and evening to say their prayers slowly and quietly. A few moments to medi-

tate on the presence of Almighty God, or ever they begin to pray : a few moments in the morning to consider what danger and trials they are likely to meet with in the day that is coming, against which to seek help from God : a few moments at noon to consider what they have done amiss, or what duties they have left undone in the day past ; for which to ask forgiveness for the past, and grace for the time to come. Would that persons would learn thus to *prepare* themselves for prayer, by setting themselves (as it were) in the solemn presence of Almighty God ; by calling up the coming trials against which they need God's help ; or the past sins, for which they need God's forgiveness ; and *then* would pray slowly and quietly ; keeping a watch over their thoughts ; and staying to see that their hearts followed their lips : no doubt all this would take some little time, but how can we spend our time better ? No doubt all this would be no easy task *at first*, but what better lesson can we set ourselves to learn than *how to pray aright* ?

No person can expect to pray as he ought *at first*. It may be easy enough to hurry over a few words, meaning little, and caring little for what we say ; but to pray *in earnest*, *this* is no

easy matter : it is a lesson which we must be content to learn by slow degrees, thankful, if by God's grace we find ourselves to make *any* the least progress in a true spirit of prayer : we must expect and prepare for trials, so soon as ever we set ourselves to do our duty : we shall be tempted by wandering thoughts, we shall be disheartened by worldly cares : *but only for a time* ; if we are resolute and set to wrestle with them, and overcome them, God will give unto us grace and strength as we go on. Good and regular habits will become formed in us, trials and temptations will cease to distress and harass us : only we must make prayer a serious and solemn matter : we must *prepare* for it, and set about it as a grave business and necessary duty. For what is it to pray to God ? Surely it is to set ourselves in the awful presence of Almighty God ; to call upon Him to hear us : when we pray, therefore, even more than at other times, it becomes us to be reverent and filled with the Spirit of God's holy fear, to put away vain thoughts and cares, and to give ourselves up wholly to one great and solemn work, i. e. to seek by diligent prayer, pardon, and peace, and grace, and strength, and every temporal and spiritual blessing from our Great Creator and most merciful Saviour.

And, now that I have spoken to you out of holy Scripture, of the great duty of devout and instant prayer; and have shewn you how necessary a duty it is, how solemn a business; and how we ought both to prepare ourselves for it beforehand, and to find or make full time to say our prayers slowly and leisurely, not hurrying them over in the morning, because we are late and in haste, not leaving them unsaid at night, because we are tired and weary; I will go on to speak of the times and seasons of private prayer *daily*.

We all know and allow that all Christians *should* pray to God morning and evening: that *this* is the very least they *can* do: but there is this further to be said, that if Christians would follow the pattern of God's saints in holy Scripture, they would endeavour to pray to God *once* in the day beside the morning and evening. This was what holy Daniel did, at the risk of his life: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house: and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees *three times a day*, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime*;" i. e. it was holy Daniel's usual custom to kneel, three times a day, to pray to and to praise God. And

so holy David says : " As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. In the evening, and morning, and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly, and He shall hear my voice." Wherein we learn what were the seasons of holy David's prayers unto God, three times a day, evening, morning, and at noon. And there is, further, reason to believe that the holy apostles and early Christians observed this season of prayer, noon, besides morning and evening, if not the other hours of prayer. It was at the sixth hour, i. e. at noon, that Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, when he saw the vision which made known to him God's purpose of mercy towards the Gentiles. How then can we do better than take as our pattern of devotion, holy David, holy Daniel, and (as we believe) the holy apostles? If they thought it not enough to pray unto God morning and evening; but also prayed unto God at noon, will it not be our wisdom also to conform so far as we can to their pattern, to do as they did, to pray unto God as often as they prayed unto God?

And here let me not be misunderstood; it is not so much that I would call upon you to pray unto God at this or that set hour, for the hour must change with men's daily business, and all men have not always leisure at one and the same hour;

but what I would press upon you is *this* (looking to the sentences of holy Scripture which teach the duty of frequent or rather of constant prayer, looking at the practice of holy men of old, who prayed unto God three times a day, morning, evening, and noon): that it is the part of Christian wisdom and piety, besides our prayers morning and evening, to set apart some time in the middle of the day for devout meditation and prayer to God.

You have seen that such a practice has the sure warrant of holy Scripture, and is after the pattern of holy men of God. And I am sure that any, who make trial of it, will find it of great and real use, as helping to keep up a sense of God and of religion through the day, and as not suffering us to be swallowed up by the cares, and pleasures, and business of life. Many are the hours that pass between our morning and our evening prayers, many the trials and dangers we meet with, many the cares which take up our hearts; or the pleasures which tempt us to forget God. Now is it not a great safeguard (with God's help) to have, in the middle of the day, some one season of prayer, some one season when we kneel down before God, place ourselves, as it were, in His presence, retire into ourselves and shut out the world; and the more our time is taken up, the

more cares press upon us, the more do we need this one respite for our soul's health. Are we tempted to forget God? the time of prayer, as it comes round, must remind us of Him: are we tempted to go on in any sin? surely to kneel down to pray, or to meditate upon death and judgment, must deter and alarm: are we growing careless? surely this must sober us: are we worn and wearied and harassed? a few moments given to devotion must soothe and calm and cheer us. Whatever of this world tempts us, whatever of this world distresses us, the remedy is one and the same, to retire from this world into the presence of Almighty God, to hold communion with Him by solemn prayer and devout meditation. Into that presence of God the world cannot follow us; there its pleasures cannot tempt us, nor its cares harass us.

But will it not be said that many persons have no place or time for prayer during the day? that if they pray morning and evening it is as much as they have occasion and leisure for? Now I know that many persons have not in their power to kneel down to pray during the day; but there are many, again, who are not so hindered, and to them I would first speak. Then those others, who are at work or so engaged that they cannot kneel down to pray, yet may find time for serious

meditation upon God, or for silent prayer, prayer from the heart, if not from the lips. Let them during their work, or at their intervals of rest, lift up their hearts to God ; let them go over in their minds Psalms or sentences of holy Scripture which they have learned ; let them meditate upon the love of God ; of the Father, who created them, of the Son, who redeemed them, of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifieth them ; upon the shortness of life, the nearness of death, the certainty of judgment, the blessedness of heaven, the utter misery of hell. If persons are in earnest, there is no place (usually) but where they may do this ; there is no business or labour but will leave them some time for serious thoughts and silent prayers, prayers from the heart, even where there is no place or time for prayers from the lips.

My brethren, these are no hard questions, no deep or hidden doctrines, no matters of dispute, they are plain and practical rules of life and duty, how to follow the pattern of holy men of old, how to fulfil the command of the apostles, and our Saviour Christ Himself, "to pray without ceasing," "to continue instant in prayer," "to pray always," "to watch thereunto with all perseverance."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

THE GODHEAD OF THE SAVIOUR MAN'S ENNOBLING.

ST. LUKE ii. 52.—*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*

THE more we look at the Church services, the more do we see of their beauty and completeness. They begin with Him who is both the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, the Lord Jesus Christ: the weeks in Advent prepared us to celebrate His birth on Christmas day, and His obedience to the law on the Circumcision, and thus naturally led our minds to the subject of His manhood. But if the Church had allowed us to rest here, we should have seen but one side of the Saviour's character: we should have learnt that He is indeed man, but should not have been reminded that He is also God. The feast of the Epiphany and the Sundays which follow it, have therefore been set apart to supply this want, and to recall to our

minds how He manifested forth His glory, i. e. shewed that He was God, both to the Gentile and the Jew. It was because the young child was the Son of God that His star was seen in the east, and brought from thence wise men to worship Him and offer Him frankincense, emblem of prayer due only to the Almighty. It was because His Father was the builder of the world and not the poor carpenter, that while teaching in the temple Christ declared He was "about His Father's business." It was because He was one far greater than the son of Mary that He said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" when she would have set Him His time for working a miracle at Cana. As God He cleansed the leper, and bade the palsy leave the servant of the centurion, as a master bidding his slave obey him. No manner of *man* could rule the winds and the sea as He did; nor cast out devils into the herd of swine: but in all these ways, the Church reminds us at this season, Christ was shewn to be the Son of God with power, and manifested forth His glory, that we with the rest of His disciples might believe on Him.

The passage in the text, together with the rest of the gospel for the day, looks to the same truth.

Christ's extraordinary wisdom and holiness even in His childhood, naturally enough made all who heard Him and knew not of His divine parentage, astonished at His understanding and answers; and filled even His mother's mind with deep and solemn thoughts of her more than mortal son, so that she kept all His sayings in her heart. How often must she have wondered within herself as to the future fate and exploits of one whose boyhood was so remarkable and so lovely; so wise and yet so humbly obedient; so fond of God's temple and its public worship, and yet so regular in His duties at home; increasing in stature, free from the common weaknesses of youth, because wholly free from sin; requiring at no time one single word of admonition or reproof, because utterly unstained even by childish faults; what wonder that as He grew from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood up to strength, He increased in favour with God and man! So fair a life, such holy early years, holy beyond all who had gone before, and all who were then His companions; could scarcely fail to point Him out as more than man, and indicate almost as clearly as the voice did afterwards from heaven, that He was the only-begotten Son of the Father, in whom He was well pleased.

This, then, being the object of the services at this time, it may not be unreasonable to consider, as a sort of completion to the thoughts of Christ's manhood that have lately occupied us, some of the effects upon us of His Godhead. His power to become a sacrifice for us, to intercede for us, to restore by His obedience what Adam lost by disobeying, and to give His flesh for the life of the world, depended on His becoming man: but we cannot believe that He who thus took our nature upon Him was also God, without expecting that very important consequences would follow such a union. Was it possible that human nature should thus be joined in one person with that of the Almighty and All-holy, and yet not be elevated by such a miracle? The words of the gospel lead us directly to the opposite belief; and shew that this taking of the manhood into God was immediately followed by the ennobling of the lower nature. It was not that the characteristics of man's nature were destroyed, but that they were raised and brought to their perfection: it is said, that our Lord increased in wisdom and stature; as gradually appearing to reach completeness in the powers of His soul as in those of the body. He shewed in Himself the presence of the Godhead, not by taking at once a glorified

body as He did after His resurrection; not by putting away human feelings and properties: but by assuming a real human body, soul, and affections, and by purifying and raising all that naturally belonged to them. The very fact that our nature could at all be joined with that of the Most High, shews that there is nothing in it by itself inconsistent with godliness; nothing, except the sin which it has contracted, that need first be driven out, rooted up, or destroyed, before we can be conformed to the image of our Maker: but only that what we have already—our thoughts, our will, our affections—have to be refined, cleansed, raised; that our reason and conscience have to be enlightened and strengthened, by a new principle implanted in us; and all this was first done in Christ Himself, by our nature being united to that of the eternal Son of God.

We must not indeed confuse the case of our Lord's taking to Himself human nature, and joining it to His divinity, with that of ourselves, who are, if we be in Him, renewed by that union. We must not confuse the pattern and the copy; whilst we learn the consoling truths which that correspondence teaches. In our Lord's case, the human nature had no existence except in union with the divine: His soul and body as soon as

it was conceived was His soul and body, joined inseparably to His divine person.

We are born and live, each having our distinct being as men, only having our nature sanctified, renewed, and as it were re-created, by being joined mystically to Christ, and by the indwelling of His Spirit. Human nature is indeed purified and glorified in Christ, and through the union of it with His Godhead it is that it becomes capable of being in each one of us so exalted and ennobled. But it is not in itself actually changed. The sin of Adam affected necessarily all his posterity; the redemption, and purification, and ennobling of our nature by Christ, is carried out effectually only in those who are spiritually united to Him by grace. We are in no wise the better, we are indeed the worse, for what He has done for us, if we are not truly conformed to His likeness. What the mystical change wrought in us by our baptism and by the receiving of the holy Eucharist may be, passes our comprehension; but it is certain that if we are not changed by it one by one in heart and life, it will at last be our condemnation. Christ, in taking our nature raised and purified it in Himself all at once. In us, however great may be the change at once wrought on us by

our being united to Him, however great that passing from death to life, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, the being set free from bondage, and gifted with the glorious liberty of the sons of God, having our whole souls pervaded by His glorious presence, as by a bright light irradiating them, yet is the purification of our wills and the strengthening of our souls a gradual and progressive work, with many hindrances and among many trials. Still guarding ourselves with these thoughts, we may profitably contemplate the ennobling of our nature in the person of Christ, as the cause and pattern of its being ennobled in His people, and may consider what this great benefit is, and how it should teach us to look upon our own nature.

The great benefit which the union of the Godhead and manhood in Christ Jesus effected for us men, while it left us still men, and with all the feelings of men, is that it raised our nature to be the companion of God. We need not look for any wondrous change, so that we should cease to be what we are, before we begin to grow better: we need not eye the saints as beings of a different mould, and made as it were of finer clay than we are; the holiest are but earthen vessels and human like ourselves. They had the

same principles in their nature that we have, the same hearts, and wills, and desires, but theirs were purified by union with the All pure, theirs were strengthened by connection with the Almighty, theirs were elevated by conjunction with the Most High: and, if we would resemble them, we must now imitate them: we must seek the same source of purity, and strength, and nobleness that they sought; like them, we must keep our bodies as the temples of the Holy Ghost; like them, we must dwell in Christ and He in us.

The firm maintenance of this doctrine will, by God's grace, keep us free from two very common errors. One is, that righteousness is not to be imparted, but only imputed to us; that is to say, that God does not require holiness in ourselves, but faith only, that Christ's holiness may be reckoned as ours. Those who hold this error, and it is far more common, I believe, even amongst professing Churchmen, than one would at first imagine, are forced to add, that our nature has of itself nothing good at all, that it is altogether a mass of corruption, needing only forgiveness and removal, and then that when it is out of the way, when our natural feelings and powers are altogether destroyed and broken down, then the spiritual life begins in us. I need

scarcely say that this is altogether unscriptural, and exactly contradicts the truth we have been considering. Christ joined the manhood to the Godhead, not to destroy the properties of manhood and build up some strange nature in its place, but using the materials, as it were, as He found them, so to order and arrange them as to fit them for the divine abode: and in like manner He brings it to pass, not only that we should be *reckoned* righteous and holy, but that, by His dwelling in us and sanctifying us, we should *be* so.

The other error to which I alluded is one regarding sacramental grace; the good, that is, which is given us in the sacraments; and this latter error very often seems to go along with the former. It is that in the sacraments only a mental union with God is to be looked for or required. That is to say, that our being joined to Christ, as He Himself tells us we must be, merely means that our minds are to be filled with the *thoughts* of Him: that repentance and faith and love are to be aroused in us by merely thinking of Him, so that those whose thoughts are clear and whose imaginations are active would be more joined to Him than duller minds or less lively fancies. This is what people call, I need not say how falsely, a *spiritual* union with Christ.

This they flatter themselves is worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. But the doctrine we have been considering leads us to a very different faith. If the person of God the Son had been joined in mere imagination with the nature of man in Christ; if it were only by force of thought that Jesus Christ drew into a human body the power of the Almighty, then perhaps we might have thought that we could do the same. But, as we have seen, this was not the case; not in imagination, but in reality—not in thought rising within himself, but indeed from the outward operation of the Holy Ghost, the human nature was taken into union with the divine nature in the person of the Son of God. Now the sacraments in like manner afford a real indwelling and a mystical union between us and our Lord: they produce in their measure upon each of those who receive them rightly, a like effect to that which the joining of the manhood to the Godhead produced in the person of Christ; because they are the means of our union with Christ: “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” “He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him.”

From this union then of God and man in Christ, and by means of our union with Him one

by one, our nature is once more righted, our manhood is ennobled, and, as St. Peter says, we are made partakers of the divine nature; all our thoughts are raised, our good resolutions confirmed, our affections lifted up to that heavenly abode and those heavenly beings where we know they ought ever to be fixed.

Let us not then doubt of our happiness, let us not hesitate to take advantage of our privilege. Do you indeed wish that your souls and bodies should be preserved to everlasting life? Do you in truth desire that all those corruptions and weaknesses of your nature, of which you are forced so often to complain, should be set in order, and yourselves raised to be the happy children of a holy and heavenly Father? Then seek to be ever more and more united with your Lord, by growing in grace and being more and more conformed to His pattern. Encourage all your natural right feelings; attend diligently to the voice of conscience within you; deepen every sentiment of gratitude, and kindliness, and compassion with the continual remembrance of Christ; let your sympathies and love be hallowed by trying to make them like His, as He shewed them to Lazarus, and St. John, and His virgin mother. When you come to the altar make it

your request that all good dispositions in you may be strengthened, raised, perfected. If you have now any pleasure in public worship, ask that like our Lord's attendance in the temple it may still be your delight to be about your Father's business. If you have now any desire after a childlike submission and purity, beg that by union with Him this may be more and more increased. He grew up a stately plant, without form indeed or comeliness in the eyes of the worldly, but full of beauty and perfection in the sight of God and His saints : pray that you may grow up in like manner. Oh ! how happy shall we be ; what a service of perfect freedom shall we find we have taken upon ourselves ; in what complete superiority to the little trials and oppositions and failures that may come upon us, shall we rejoice, if we do but calm our hearts after this fashion. Let us not fail to do it ; let us not hesitate to dedicate ourselves to Him, who will assuredly come unto us and dwell with us, will comfort us, will sanctify us, will make us perfect ; and as we grow in favour with God and man, will give us it may be some quiet confidence and humble hope that in the end we shall abide with Him for ever.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

SERVING GOD IN BUSINESS.

ROM. xii. 11. *Not slothful in business: fervent in Spirit: serving the Lord.*

THE portion of Scripture out of which the epistle is taken is one of the most instructive in the whole Bible in regard to the practical duties of our daily life. The beginning of the chapter was the epistle for last Sunday, and the two are full of precepts which will guide and direct our conduct in this our ordinary life. Each portion, for instance, of such a verse as the text, would be a profitable subject for meditation and practice on any one day.

In the epistle these precepts come, as the portion read last Sunday shews, after St. Paul had been dwelling on doctrinal subjects, on our being accepted of God, and chosen to be His people without being Jews by birth or by circumcision. They are the application of those

doctrines. They shew how we ought to act after we have come to the knowledge of God's great mercy and loving kindness towards us. St. Paul usually does thus apply doctrine to practice. He does not allow us to rest in bare knowledge of doctrines, nor yet to be content with admiring and adoring the mercies of God in Christ, or feeling strongly, or thanking Him in words; he does not allow our good feelings to pass away or evaporate, he turns them to account in action.

And very fitly does the Church follow in this course. When we are fresh from the contemplation of the great blessings of Christmas, the glory of the Incarnation, and the ennobling of our nature in Christ: whilst now, Sunday after Sunday, we trace the successive manifestations of His divine glory, she calls us to practise in our daily life the lessons of Christian obedience.

And in nothing is this passage more remarkable than in its truly *practical* character. The apostle speaks to us as men, who, though not of the world, are yet in the world; even as our blessed Lord prayed to His Father, not that He should take His people *out of the world, but* that He should keep them from the evil. As being in the world we have duties to perform belonging

to the world, and our religion will be shewn by the doing those duties well.

When indeed we consider the great truths of our religion,—the shortness of life, the importance of eternity, the holiness of God, our own high calling as Christians, the great prospects which are set before us as the redeemed of Christ, this might in itself easily unsettle the thoughts, and distract us from pursuing diligently our ordinary occupations, seeming, as they might, so mean and unprofitable, and make us think them a mere burden, or a hindrance to our religious life.

And we do actually find that some persons, particularly those who do not learn their religion from the sober teaching of Christ's holy Church, do speak and act as if worldly occupations and religion were somehow or other necessarily opposed to one another: and so some persons make worldly business an excuse for not being religious. Others again thinking still that these things are incompatible, are tempted to make religion an excuse for not doing their duty in the world. Thus some seem to think attention to what they fancy religious duties is a reason for neglecting their families, for not trying to make their homes happy, for omitting the duties of

kindness to their neighbours. Thus they tear asunder what God has joined together, the practice of religion and the duties and business of life.

It is indeed plain that if worldly business and the service of God are inconsistent, worldly business must give way; for no man can serve two masters; and the first of all duties is to love, to serve, and to please God. We shall however soon see that they are not inconsistent; and that this is too often only an excuse.

And here I would have you observe how beautifully the different parts of the services of the Church throw light upon each other; the gospels for instance, and the epistles. The epistles on these Sundays teach us that being so privileged and blessed and exalted as we are through the grace of Christ and His Incarnation, we should not neglect the humble duties of daily life, but should perform them the more diligently: and the gospels put before us our great Example, leading us in the way. Conscious of His divinity, being the God of heaven while He lived on earth, His soul united with the Godhead and filled by thoughts infinitely above this earth, He yet condescended to be subject to His own creatures, to His mother

and to Joseph ; He went into the temple, was with the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions ; and to-day He goes to a marriage feast, and is as one of the ordinary guests ; teaching us that we are not even to neglect the kindly intercourse of social life.

Who then with this example before him, can imagine that any privileges or any religious considerations justify his neglecting those duties to which God has called him ? The religion of Christ teaches us, as Christ's example does, to serve Him (ordinarily speaking and excepting particular cases) in doing our duty in the world, and by the performance of the duties of life. No doubt there are exceptions to this ; there are persons who are called, so to say, out of the world ; but they are few. The apostles, for instance, were called from their ordinary duties ; they were bidden by Christ to leave, some their fishing, others the receipt of custom, to be with Him, and to go out and preach the Gospel ; they were called to give themselves " to the ministry of the word and to prayer." So also under the Old Testament we see Moses called from keeping the flock of Jethro, and Elisha from following the plough, and Amos from being a gatherer of summer fruit, to do the special work of the

Lord: not called to be idle, but to be diligent in a particular kind of work.

But these are extraordinary cases; the duty of most of us lies, as I have said, in serving God in the performance of our duties in the world: and our religion is practised by doing those duties well. By doing them, that is to say, with faithfulness, with diligence, and with care, and that as unto the Lord and not unto men. It has been well said, that religion lies *not in doing extraordinary things, but in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well*; in doing everything which we have to do as well as we can; and aiming at perfection in our common and every-day works. Whether it be that our business lies in labouring in the fields, or in mechanical works, or in trade, or the care of our families, or in study, or in attention to others, our religion is shewn by doing each thing that we have to do as thoroughly and as well as possible; as the apostle elsewhere says, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Now the text says, that we are to be "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" and so teaches us first, that we ought to do our worldly duties diligently, being "not slothful in business," and then tells us how

we may best do them, and be at the same time guarded against the dangers which beset us in doing them, by "being fervent in spirit," and "serving the Lord."

For there is, I need not say, one great danger when men are trying to do all their worldly business and works well; the danger of forgetting God and another world, from thinking of the work they have to do here, and of nothing else; and so indeed we continually see men who seem to do their work in this world (in one way) *well*, and never (so far as we can judge) care about another. Their interest in their work, their devoting all their thoughts to it, and allowing it to take up all their time, draws away their hearts from God: and thus the business and cares of this life choke the good seed of religious principle and it becomes unfruitful.

But the simple rule which the text puts before us will guard us against both these dangers.

First, it bids us not to be slothful in business, which is a plain sin, very dangerous to our souls. And so in the Old Testament we read; "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" that is, whatever you have to do, whether for yourself or for a master, each particular thing as it comes before you in the course of each day,

do it not slothfully and carelessly, but with zeal, and diligence, and in earnest, and as well as you can. It is to be done heartily, not in a lukewarm and indifferent way, as if you did not care about it, but *zealously*—for this is the meaning of the words, *fervent* in spirit. Fervent means being warm, and the word zeal comes from it; it is the opposite to our expression of being cold about any thing, or as we say, lukewarm.

Now it is very natural to ask; How can I do this? How can I be so attentive to my work without having my thoughts and my affections drawn away from God and heavenly things, and fixed and lost in the cares and works of this life? The text answers. It is by doing all this *for our Lord, and as His servants*—it is by “serving the Lord.” It is Almighty God who is really our Master; it is He in reality who orders us to work, and who appoints us our daily task. All is from Him. It is His will that we should labour during our life on earth; as even in paradise He appointed Adam to till the ground; and it is by His providence that the particular work which we are to do is determined for us. He comes as it were and sets us our several tasks. One He appoints to labour with the hands, another with the head; to one He gives toilsome

out-door work, to another a life spent in the care of things at home; to others to work for parents, or masters, or families, or dependents, or neighbours; to one to labour for his own support, to another to assist those whom God's providence calls us to help, whether with our time or with our money. God is the great Master over all, and our work is assigned and portioned out by Him.

Now consider what a help it will be to us to keep this thought in our minds; how it will spur us on to do our work well, when we consider that we are doing that work which our Lord has given us to do, and which He wishes us to do well. How will it check the risings of any complaining thoughts if we say to ourselves, My work has been set out for me by one who knows my strength, who loves me greatly, who knows what is best and who wishes what is best for me;—and how should it make us do our work heartily, if we remember that we are doing it for our best friend, for one to whom we owe so much, for a master who is so kind and considerate: as St. Paul bids us to do things “heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men.”

Besides, consider that He for whom our work is done knows and sees all things, even the

most secret motions of our heart: He can appreciate the good intention which fails of satisfying an earthly master: He is ever looking on and sees what we are doing. The master's eye we know quickens the servant in his work; but our Master's Eye is always upon us, so that if we rightly consider that we are serving the Lord, we shall always do our work well; not better for a time only and then falling away again, but steadily and continually, as those who know that their Master is in heaven, and He a Master who has promised that no work done well for Him shall lose its reward.

You see then how this thought, that we are "serving the Lord" in our daily works, will secure our doing our work well; as it will also keep us from neglecting our wordly duties under the notion that God is served only when we are actually engaged in directly religious duties: for it will make all our duties religious, and it will turn them all into acts of service to God; as the apostle in the beginning of this chapter calls the presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, our reasonable *religious* service, for that is the meaning of the word "service" here.

And the doing our duties as a service to God will, on the other hand, as is plain, be the best

way of preserving us from the danger to which we are always exposed, of allowing worldly business to draw us away from God ; for our works, instead of being acts of turning away from God to the world, will become the very occasions of our turning towards God ; and so the work of every day will be like a religious service or a prayer.

Nor will one who is thus minded neglect the direct exercises of religion. Religion being the first thing in his mind, prayers and praises will be the first desire of his heart, and whatever time he may and can give to them he will. Indeed the diligent discharge of our duties in life helps us to pray better, as indeed how can any one pray[?] with any confidence who is neglecting them? But besides this, increased earnestness and reality is given to prayer by a life of active good ; and so bishop Wilson says : “ In order to dispose our hearts to devotion, the active life is to be preferred to the contemplative.”

I need scarcely say that the giving up proper time for our prayers, for religious thought, and if we can for reading, is quite necessary for keeping us right in the midst of worldly business. Without this we cannot hope to secure the grace and help of God. Nor can we keep in our minds an

habitual intention of doing all our works as a religious service to Him, unless at set times we do so in a distinct way, and turn our thoughts from worldly subjects altogether to fix them only on God; as the same bishop recommending us to avoid, as much as may be, multiplicity of business, which is likely to distract our minds, says, "neither the innocency nor the goodness of the employment will excuse us, if it possess our hearts when we are praying to God."

Such times, it is plain, are chiefly the morning and evening, the beginning and the end of our day, which *must* be taken from the world for some religious thought and earnest prayer, if we would not quite fall away from God. The beginning of the day, when we should give ourselves afresh to God, as by saying, "Lord, I give myself this day to Thy service," steadily considering the work we have that day to do, and resolving to do it well for His sake. The evening, when we must review what we have done, and with real contrition ask pardon for our faults. Every man is bound to do this at least. And some may have the opportunity and leisure for coming to prayers at church, which is best of all.

We ought also frequently during the day to recal the thought of God and renew our resolu-

tion of serving Him, which may be done by lifting our hearts to God, or by a few words said to ourselves at any time ; or again between the parts of work, by giving the soul its spiritual refreshment and support, as the body has its meals ; or by many persons whose work is of a kind that allows them to think whilst doing it, by religious thought. Many persons have work which does not hinder thinking ; and they must always be thinking of something. Happy are they if they think of God and of the things He has done for them, of what they have heard in Church or read in their Bibles.

Besides these there are other *set times* which God has given to all. Such is the holy rest of the Lord's day ; and again the evening before, when we may clear our minds from the thought of worldly matters and put them quite aside, and so prepare ourselves for keeping His holy day aright. Sunday and Saturday night, kept clear from anxious, busy, and restless thoughts, and given up to God and religious services, and reading the Bible, and good books, and to quiet thought, will be one of the chief ways of securing us in serving the Lord, whilst we are diligent in our daily work, and in preventing our daily work from gaining too great a hold

over our thoughts and affections. Other and daily means of religious thought are by saying to ourselves some of the Psalms, or a hymn, or the lifting up the soul earnestly to God, or the calling to mind the life, and actions, and graces, of some holy man whom we have read of in the Bible or in other books ; *above all the thinking of our blessed Lord, and setting His example before us, considering how He would have done each thing.* Most persons have employment which allow them to do this in thought from time to time ; or we may do it as the Bible says, when we sit in our house, and when we walk by the way. They who cannot do it when at their work, have need to seize times from their work for doing it, and the best way no doubt is to have special times, however short.

We may be quite sure that even as regards our worldly work itself, the seizing some time for prayer or thought will be no hindrance to it. We shall return with fresh spirit, with greater energy, and above all, with God's blessing.

Indeed, as if to teach us that no amount of worldly business, however important or occupying, need hinder our religious progress, if we will only take time out of it for God, and that the most busy may find such time,—as if to shew us this,

I say, holy Scripture puts before us instances of it, in the lives of the most remarkable servants of God. For instance you read in the Psalms,

“I have set God always before me.”

“At morning, and evening, and at noonday, will I pray, and that instantly.”

“*Seven* times a day do I praise Thee.”

“Have I not remembered Thee on my bed, and thought upon Thee when I was waking?”

“Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might be occupied in Thy words.”

“At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee, because of Thy righteous judgments.”

“Commune with your own heart and in your chamber, and be still.”

Who was he that said these words? and what was his way of life? was he a hermit or a recluse, or a person whose time lay idle on his hands? No. David was first a shepherd, then he was a great warrior and a courtier, then he became a wandering unsettled outcast, then he was a king; and not a king who usually lived at ease, but one who had the concerns of a great empire in his hands and many wars on every side. Yet amid all this he was the model of the devotions of the saints in every age.

And again, there was one who invariably went into his chamber and kneeled down, and pray-

ed three times every day ; who gave himself to fasting and prayer week after week ; who seized time to intercede for hours together for his people. I mean the prophet Daniel. Yet you remember that Daniel was the chief over all the officers of the kingdom of Babylon, and that was one of the greatest empires that ever existed ; and Daniel was all his life an officer in the king's palace, and for nearly the whole of it was what we should call prime minister of that great kingdom. Where there is a ready mind ways will be found of gaining time for prayer and praise, and religious thought, and, it may be, religious reading ; and where there is a ready mind, a man is accepted according to that he hath, not according to that he hath not : and God will bless the shortest prayer of the poor labourer who has not time for more, if he pray in earnest ; and if a man uses well the time he has, He will give him more time. And thus by his own experience will the sincere Christian find that business is not inconsistent with religion, and that religion is really exercised in the right discharge of our daily works, and that devotion and practical duties mutually promote and improve each other.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

INVITATION TO THE THIRSTY.

ISAIAH lv. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

THESE holy and consoling words are spoken in the person of our blessed Saviour: spoken indeed long before His coming to redeem the world, yet on His behalf, by one through whom the Holy Ghost was speaking; and who was therefore able to foreshew His gracious compassion and free bounty, who when He had come, stood and cried, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

We know then, my brethren, by whom this gracious invitation is given; even by Him who gave Himself for us, that from His pierced side might flow forth water and blood, for the

cleansing and refreshing of sin-defiled and sin-weary souls. It is His free invitation who turned the hard rock of human nature into a standing water, and the flint stone of sinful hearts into a springing well.

He gives the invitation: to whom then is it given?

To all who are conscious of their necessity: to all who are dissatisfied with themselves, and weary of their trials and their faults, and long to be delivered from the one, by being set free from the thralldom of the other. It is a most full, free, and generous invitation, not confined to a few favoured ones, but addressed alike to all poor sinners, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

But it is plain that the gracious Lord who gives the invitation, does not expect that all who hear it will readily accept it. On the contrary, He evidently expects that many who hear it will be already engaged in endeavouring to satisfy their hunger and thirst with other viands, that they will not be prepared to attend to Him, for He adds immediately, "Wherefore do ye spend

money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" But even these are not excluded from His invitation; for even to them He adds, "Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

But alas, my brethren, there are, there ever have been, and doubtless there are among ourselves, some who do not seem to be included, even in this most free and open invitation. It is not addressed to those who are full and increased in goods, and in need of nothing; not to those who are self-satisfied, self-righteous, and self-dependent; our Lord expressly says Himself, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance;" so also in this passage, by the mouth of His prophet, he invites the thirsty, weary, fainting souls of those who are longing for a higher, purer, fresher, and happier life, than this world with its best and most innocent joys can afford them.

We see, then, that a certain state of mind is required of all who hear this invitation, before they can accept it. The proud and self-confident cannot even hear it. Those who are eagerly seeking to quench the natural thirst which is ever burning in fallen human nature with some-

thing lower and less worthy than the grace which is in Christ, must, when they hear His voice, turn from the broken cisterns of this world's joys and comforts, to that living well of water, of which whosoever drinketh shall thirst no more.

To all of you then, my brethren, who feel your need of something better than life has yet afforded you, these words are spoken. The gracious invitation is yours: for your special comfort, and to lead you to eternal happiness it was given. The more deeply you are conscious of your misery, your weakness, your necessities, the more certainly it is you who are called to come unto the waters. The more abject your conscious poverty, and the more overwhelming your sense of unworthiness, the more surely it is you who are invited to "buy wine and milk without money and without price."

The very words of the text express as much: but other passages of holy Scripture with which you are familiar, will shew you the same in a different light.

First, our Saviour says in His sermon on the mount, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," that is, blessed are those who think meanly of themselves, who feel and confess their own unworthiness, who acknowledge their faults, and whose sin is

ever before them : and again He says, "Blessed are those that mourn," that is, blessed are those whose sinfulness and worthlessness are a grief and shame to them : and again He says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled ;" that is, He gives His special blessing to exactly those persons who are invited by Him in the text to buy and eat that which is good, and to delight themselves in the fatness of His all-sufficing sacrifice.

But secondly, however deep and humbling may be your sense of your own poverty and sinfulness, you do not stand alone in this your self-abasement. Thousands have felt the same before you, even more deeply and painfully I doubt not, than you have yet felt : and this very self-renunciation, and poverty of spirit, have recommended them to the mercy and the grace of Christ ; for man in his misery is the special chosen object of God's mercy.

Hear how the Psalmist expresses his deep spiritual necessities in Psalm xxii. 15 ; "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth unto my gums, and Thou shalt bring me into the dust of death." And again,

in Psalm xxxii. 3, 4; "For while I held my tongue, my bones consumed away through my daily complaining. For Thy hand is heavy upon me day and night, and my moisture is like the drought in summer." And again, in Psalm xlii. 1, 2; "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God. My tears have been my meat day and night; while they say daily unto me, Where is now thy God?" And once more, in Psalm cii. 3, 4, 5, 9; "My days are consumed away like smoke, and my bones are burnt up as it were a fire-brand. My heart is smitten down, and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. For the voice of my groaning: my bones will scarce cleave to my flesh. . . . For I have eaten ashes as it were bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. . . . My days are gone like a shadow, and I am withered like grass." Thus, my brethren, does the man after God's own heart give utterance to his deep necessities, the longings of his thirsty soul for the heavenly waters of the grace of God: and if many of these self-humbling confessions of poverty and want, occurring as they do in the Psalms of the Passion, express the deep misery of the "Man

of Sorrows," this should give them a holier and deeper meaning for us.

Job expresses his misery and helplessness in very similar language (chap. xxx. 10;) "My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat." Jeremiah utters on behalf of others the same feelings in these words, (Lam. iii. 27, 28;) "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." And again, uniting himself in their complaint, (chap. v. 4, 9, 10;) "We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us . . . we gat our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness. Our skin was black as an oven because of the terrible famine."

This is the spirit in which fallen men have ever approached acceptably to their Maker against whom they have sinned. Thus in all ages have the saints of God turned from the world, acknowledging their sin and misery; renouncing their confidence in human help, and thirsting for the refreshing waters of divine consolation; and, thus approaching their God and Saviour, they have been accepted and satisfied by Him of

whom it is said, (Isaiah xl. 29,) "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength;" and again, (xli. 17,) "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." And again, (chap. xxxv. 5,) foretelling Gospel times and their blessings, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land pools of water." And once more, (chap. xlv. 3,) "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

In almost all of these passages you will perceive that these promises of "the living waters" spoken of by the prophet Zechariah, which should "go out from Jerusalem," are given to parched, longing souls: to those who have found no satisfaction for their immortal being in the

natural pleasures of this earthly life, and burning with the fever of a wounded spirit, have sought health and refreshment from the wells of salvation.

Whosoever, therefore, (among you, my brethren,) are craving, from whatever cause, for some better portion than you have yet enjoyed; to you is this most cheering invitation spoken by our Lord and Saviour, "Come ye to the waters . . . come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If the thirst of your soul is the effect of some affliction that has come upon you in the course of God's providence, let it lead you to meditate more deeply and seriously on the sins of your past lives, your evil hearts, and your natural helplessness against the power of your corruptions; and then you may by the grace of God be led so to hunger and thirst after righteousness that you shall be filled; and the afflictions which have cast you down, and been the means of humbling you before God, will have proved the greatest blessing that could have befallen you.

But if you are suffering under no outward afflictions; if cares and sorrows, losses and disappointments, have not yet fallen upon you, it

does not therefore follow that your soul should not be athirst for the waters of life. For of these Gospel times it was foretold by the prophet Amos (viii. 13 ;) “In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst : not for any famine of bread, or thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.” See then, my brethren, that ye hear those words and heed them, or otherwise that afflicting thirst for the waters of happiness and purity, which (I know) you sometimes feel, will turn to a gnawing dissatisfaction and restless craving for new gratifications, however unwholesome and however sinful, which will end in unquenchable burnings.

But suffer it not to be so, my brethren ; it is not your Saviour’s will that any of you for whom He died should thus miserably perish. He calls you that you may hear. He invites you that you may come. What great blessings He has in store for those of you who hear and obey His call I cannot now describe to you at all fully. Whatever they may be, (and some of you I trust know them by experience,) they certainly are described under very alluring images. And this no doubt is mercifully and graciously done to draw you on to “taste” for yourselves “and see how gracious the Lord is.” To cap-

tivate your imaginations, to influence your desires, to kindle your hopes, He tells you of the living waters, bright and pure, the wine and the milk, and the honey, and the wheat, and the oil, refreshment, and life, and nourishment, and sweetness, and strength, and beauty. See how to the very last page of the sacred book He thus allures you to Himself, in the last chapter of the last book of the New Testament: "And He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the streets of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." When we read and reflect upon those glorious descriptions of the good things which God has in store for them that love Him, we cannot but feel how impossible it is that we should ever be meet to partake them unless we come as those who are wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked, hungering and thirsting after that for which we can offer neither money nor price. Oh! then, what an unspeakable comfort it is to feel that this glorious tree of life is no other than that which was

planted upon Calvary, and that He who hung upon it is Himself our healer and the sustenance of our souls. And if we come in faith to Him, humbly and penitently, and in the ways of His appointment, He will give us even in this life, mysteriously yet truly, His own sacred body and blood, and all the virtues that are in Him, through them; and hereafter assign us a place with those who "hunger no more, nor thirst any more for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

CHRIST THE RESTORER.

ST. MARK V. 9. *And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.*

WE couple with the name of Christ the name of Jesus, or the Saviour. Rightly we do so: for by this we mean to honour Him as our Redeemer; one, that is, who has bought us back for His own, from the guilt of sin and the punishment due to it; as our Deliverer, one who has freed us from the bondage of evil, and given us power to "learn to do well;" and as our Teacher, one who has set before us the perfect way, and marked it with His own footsteps. All this is true; it is most needful for us to bear it continually in mind: but there is yet another meaning hidden in that name of Saviour, which though perhaps not so often felt or confessed, is still most cheering, and not less true or needful to be ever in our hearts; I mean that He is

Christ our Restorer : one, that is, who renews in us whatsoever good thing the devil may have destroyed. Those who are contending with the remains of some old sin,—those who, conscious of their own weakness, are afraid to begin a holier way of life : those who are disquieted with the remorseful feeling that their powers are but the ruin of what God gave them at the first : those who sometimes fear that the Almighty, a just and severe master, has left them to the tormentors : souls such as these make up a great proportion of the Christian world. Is it not well, then, that they should often be reminded of Christ the Healer, the Restorer of fallen man ? I wish to persuade all such, all who feel that they have in any degree, and by any faults, destroyed their own happiness, that their case is fully known and provided for by Christ. They have not only an Almighty judge, but an Almighty restorer. He understands the best way to recal them to themselves ; He will put them into the happiest course for their recovery. Only let them trust themselves in His hands : let them take the troubles or disappointments or self-denials He may offer them, as the only treatment that can be of use ; let them confidently yet patiently work along with Him, and

wait upon Him wheresoever they believe He may be found.

2. That such should be His office they may most undoubtingly believe, for it was more than once foretold before He came into the world. Thus Amos had prophesied (ix. 11) of His coming: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in days of old." The tabernacle of David, this weak corrupted human nature which the Son of God took upon Him when He became the Son of David according to the flesh, we may feel to be indeed fallen from what it was in the days of old: full of many a rent and ruined—yet by Him it may be raised again, its rents closed up, its ruins all rebuilt. Again, when the Psalmist says, "Thou shalt renew the face of the earth;" or as elsewhere, "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow: Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice;" we know that he refers to the same great work of renovation begun for us by Christ. And once more, to what but to the work of Him our re-

storer, our strengthener against all the power of the evil one, do those last words of Malachi allude; "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with *healing* in His wings: and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of Hosts."

3. From these and other like predictions we might have been sure that whatsoever rebuilding of our shattered nature was required, Christ would perform it; whatever binding up was needful for the bones that had been broken, Christ would bind them; whatever healing of the wounded conscience was to be desired, or victory over the wicked one who had so wounded it, Christ would accomplish all. And in the history of the Gadarene demoniac, of which the text forms a part, we find that it is so.

For what Christ shewed Himself to be in His treatment of this poor outcast, we thereby learn that He is in His treatment of all who are afflicted in any like way. This Gospel, like all the services of this season, is designed to bear on this one subject, the manifestation of Christ. We have traced Sunday after Sunday the suc-

cessive manifestations of what He really is ; our God, full of wisdom, power, and love. To-day we have read of His power over the elements ; the wind and sea were obedient to His voice. And not only over the powers of nature but over the evil spirits, He exercised Divine sway as the Lord and Maker and Judge, before whom they shrunk and trembled. Manifestations of Divine power are these, but they are still more manifestations of love ; of that unbounded Divine love which brought the Son of God from heaven to undertake the work of our salvation, which shone forth so tenderly in His whole life on earth.

Now when we look on these manifestations of the Divine nature of our Saviour, of His infinite power, His unsearchable wisdom, His inexhaustible love ; we should remember that they are designed to manifest forth to us what He is now ; what He is in Himself, what He is towards us ; the Saviour manifested in the Gospels is our Saviour, exalted to the right hand of God in heaven ; having all power in heaven and in earth, able still as then to remove our bodily diseases, to raise us from the bed of death, to calm the tempests of the world in which our hearts fail for fear ; His wisdom is the same, knowing what is

best for us; His love is as infinite, as tender, considerate, sympathising, desirous of our good, as when He was on earth. Thus it is that Christ manifests Himself to us in the Gospels. Manifests what He now is, through what He then was and did. With these thoughts present in our minds, let us consider the history now before us.

First, we must recollect to what one single source every ill that can afflict us, either in body or soul, is to be traced. It is none other than the power of Satan that first brought ruin upon the creatures of God: and it is still the same malignant spirit, who, changed and fallen himself, is ever thrusting man into the same misery as his own. "He was a murderer from the beginning," and through him it was that "by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin;" and all things tending towards death, all changes from good to bad, all the overcloudings of early happiness by the sorrows of later years, flow from that envious, cruel, fatal act of his. To undo, therefore, the work of Satan in the case of any one who suffers from any kind of wretchedness, is the first object of our Saviour. "For this purpose," says St. John, "the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." What an as-

surance has He given us of His power and willingness to do so in the instance of this unhappy maniac.

The precise nature of the affliction under which the miserable man was labouring, so often spoken of in Scripture as the being possessed by an unclean spirit, is not very easy to decide. It could not be a mere bodily, and, as we say, natural, ailment, for there is clearly in the case before us, as well as in many others, the real personal presence of evil spirits. Christ bids the spirits come out of him, and when they have come out they enter into the herd of swine. In another instance the evil spirit ere it departs tears its victim so terribly that many who saw him cried out that he was dead. And in a third case a knowledge is attributed to the unclean spirit, which the man possessed by it could not have had of himself. "Let us alone," are the words it forces him to utter; "what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." But as on the one hand this possession is evidently not a *mere* bodily disease, so on the other hand it is clearly distinct from any state of sinfulness alone, however excessive. The devil's power had not

only ruined the soul, but had made a wreck also of the body. It is true that long indulgence in some kinds of sin, especially such as those of uncleanness and intemperance and violent passion, will shatter the frame of the sinner at the same time that it brings destruction on his soul. We may trace sometimes even now the devil's victims in their downward progress: allured at first by many a deceit to occasional acts of sin—then drawn by its pleasantness to tie their own hands with the repeated windings of the thread of evil habits—till at last completely powerless to escape, the fiend seems to care no longer to allure them, or to make their sin the source of pleasure, but takes his scourge, now secure of his slaves, and lashes them on, poor tottering idiots, pained in every limb, and jarred on every nerve, to their home of endless torture. It is true, I say, that even now we may thus sometimes see sin and bodily suffering united—but it is at once manifest that these cases differ altogether from those of possession spoken of in Scripture; inasmuch as the bodily disorder arises not from any direct power of the evil one over the limbs of the sufferer, but from their having been made again and again the instruments of sin. The natural powers of the body

are deranged by the continued abuse of them, not by any sudden influence of Satan himself upon them.

Possession, then, by a devil was neither mere bodily disease, nor simply a great degree of wickedness, nor yet a disorder caused by habits of sin ; but probably in reality what its name really implies, an actual slavery to some one or more evil spirits. We must not, however, imagine that the fiends were shut up within the bodies of those whom they tormented, though their entering afterwards into the herd of swine might at first sight seem to lead to this explanation. They were present in and acted probably upon the *will* both of the men and of the brutes over whom they were permitted to have power, and through the will directly upon their bodies. Having once obtained liberty to distress their victim, they left him for the time no will or reason of his own. Some they forced madly to throw themselves into the fire and into the water ; some they compelled to be continually dumb ; others again they caused to fall wallowing on the ground ; and others again to fall on their enemies and cast them wounded out of the house. How they ever obtained this power we do not know ; nor whether they retain it in any case now, since Christ has

by death overcome him that had the power of death, that is the devil, has seen Satan like lightning fall from heaven, and has trodden under foot all the power of the enemy; though the testimony of those who have laboured as missionaries in heathen lands seems to shew us that there, where the power of the devil reigns as yet unchecked, something of the kind still exists.

Under such a power, however, the wretched Gadarene in the passage before us had been reduced to a most pitiable state. All scarred with self-inflicted wounds, wild and wasted, naked and dwelling in the rocky caves that served his countrymen for tombs, day and night he wandered with a companion as frantic as himself up and down upon the cliffs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. They had bound him with fetters and chains, but in his ravings he had plucked them asunder: they had tried to calm and tame him, but he was as frenzied as ever: counting all men his enemies, so fierce and dangerous had he grown, that no one durst pass by that way. What greater ruin of human nature could there be on this side the grave? Where were the hopes and affections and sympathies that make up the best part of our life upon earth? Where were the employments by which he should

have been of use to his fellows? the pursuits by which he should have improved himself? the recreations in which he might have given pleasure to others? Well had he chosen his dwelling amongst the dead, for to all that can be called life he was as insensible, as lost, as they. And now when Jesus approached, the struggle between his own reason and the will of the fiends who possessed him seemed to come to its height. His own will led him to the feet of Christ in hopes, it would appear, of a recovery; but when there the will of his tormentors forced him to cry out, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not."

I have chosen the words in which Jesus replies for my text, because they seem to mark the turning point where our Saviour begins the work of restoration, and to shew the means He used to accomplish it. He would use the memory of happier years while as yet the evil one was away, to recal him to himself again: He asks him simply, "What is thy name?" His name? He had not heard it perhaps for years. He had heard it once within his father's home—but he was different then! It was the name of one who was innocent and happy—he had heard it from

the lips of those who had loved him—it had rung perchance along the lake as he used to sport upon its shores. But now he is no more what once he was called. How fallen beneath Satan's power, how changed, how lost, how strange to his former self. When Naomi returned to her native town, so changed in fortune, her husband and her sons taken from her, and all her fulness changed to poverty—her former friends, we are told, went out to see her, and cried, "Is this Naomi?" "Call me not Naomi," was the answer; "call me Mara," (or the bitter,) "for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me." The name that suited her when all things went pleasantly, she felt to be unsuitable then, when her mirth was changed into sorrow. It was with something of the same sad feeling doubtless that the poor maniac gave to our Lord not the name he had borne as a youth, but one that told all the cause of his misery. "My name," said he, "is Legion: for we are many." He spoke as if he were but the mouthpiece of the evil spirits that possessed him, and with humble entreaty was found to supplicate for them, that they might not be sent out into the deep—into the depth, that is, of their place of punishment in hell. We need not rest upon all that followed: our Lord had by that one ques-

tion recalled the sufferer's mind to himself, and shewn him that he had still a being distinct from that of the evil one who ruled him. A hope had broken in upon him that he was not yet wholly lost—that he might yet be restored—and with this hope the cure he longed for was at once effected. At Jesus' bidding the legion is cast out: and soon the once wild and fierce maniac is seen "clothed and in his right mind," and seated at the feet of his Restorer, listening to the words of life.

Now, are there any of us one tenth as bad as this poor man? However changed by suffering, or by grief, or sin, from that which we remember ourselves once to have been, are we in as hopeless a state as he? The remains of sin may still be a weight on us; the spiritual weakness caused by bad habits may frighten us from trying to amend; there may be marks of ruin unseen by all except our own souls; but surely we need not give up hope when we know of such a Saviour as we have here. Let us for a moment imagine ourselves to be standing before Him—rather let us *believe* that we are so standing. He asks the name given us in baptism. Does it remind us we are fallen from what we then were made? Does it awaken within us any conflict of present

bad habits with a desire of regaining what we have lost? Does it shew us where all the sadness, all the disquiet, all the wickedness that have perchance for years been spreading in us had their beginning? Let me ask you not to shrink from that sight. It may indeed be painful at the first; it may almost make us say that we too are Legion, for our faults are many. But it may by God's blessing be the means that Christ may take to restore us to ourselves. Of the prodigal son we are told, that when he came to himself he said, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." He could not venture to take the name by which his father had called to him as his child. If we return to Christ with that same humbleness of mind, we need not doubt but that the end will be the same: there will be joy in heaven over any that now are lost but then shall be found. What God once said to His people of old, we may well believe Christ then will say to us, though with a deeper meaning: "If thou wilt diligently hearken unto the words of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee,"—none of this ruin which we fear—"for I am the Lord that healeth thee."

One observation more we ought not to omit. Every one who has recovered from any ill habit or sadness by Christ's aid, and every one who is either struggling against them now, or has resolved, in reliance upon such a Saviour, to begin the struggle forthwith, must feel that he wishes as little distraction as possible from our Lord's service. Such an one would desire to withdraw as much as possible from the world and even his friends, in order to have more time for religious duties. The sequel of the Gadarene's history may serve to teach us another view. He desired to accompany Christ into the ship, and follow Him whithersoever He went; but Jesus would not suffer him. "Go home," He said, "to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

His merciful restorer knew what was best for him; He would not recommend anything which would have marred the gracious work that He had done. Many He had called to leave their homes and to come and be with Him continually. This poor restored man He sent from Himself to be with his friends. He was the best judge. Though the restored sinner feels scarcely safe anywhere but with Christ, though it would be the delight of his heart to see Him always before

him, and to be listening to His gracious words, Christ sends him to his home and to his friends, to practise amongst them the duties and charities of domestic life, to do well now what he had done ill before ; that he might shew them how great things the Lord had done for him, not only by words, but by their actually seeing how changed he is. That the sullenness, the reserve, the jealousy, the irritability, the violence, which made his home miserable before—and these are the tempers which the sinner's dissatisfaction with himself and his bad conscience produce, as did the evil spirit in the demoniac—may be seen to be converted into kindness, and openness, and generosity, and meekness, and patient love. It is the privilege of saints and saintly penitents to be with Christ continually ; He knows, it may be, that it would be too much for this restored sinner to be always in His presence ; and that he will be more safe, and more likely to hold on in a calm and tranquil course of recovery, if he is engaged in the discharge of his home duties, (in the practical conduct of life,) and shewing his love to his restorer by trying to please Him.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

GOD MANIFESTED NOT BY THE MATERIAL CREATION BUT
BY THE INCARNATION.

1 COR. i. 21. *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

WONDERFUL are the works of God which encompass us. Look up to the blue arch of heaven enfolding us, where the sun rides forth in his might as a giant to run his course: where the stars look down upon us from their watches, and though they have neither speech nor language yet their voices are heard, and in silent and awful eloquence they tell us of their Creator. Or stand again upon the sea side, and look out upon the horizon without a limit, and hearken to the still hush of the tide as it comes breaking in upon the shore, and think that that solemn sound, that restless ebb and flow, has never ceased for near six thousand years, and say, have those waters no voice to tell of One who is almighty

and eternal. Or again, look upon the earth in which we live, consider the strength and might of the mountains, the richness of the valleys, the order of the seasons, the changes of day and night, the innumerable tribes of living creatures that dwell upon the earth, and in the waters, and in the air, and who does not feel disposed to break out in the very words of the Psalmist and say, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all, the earth is full of Thy riches. So is the great and wide sea also."

These are the manifestations of God's wisdom and power; they are as it were His preachers whereby He ever taught to the world some of His own infinite perfections, as the apostle says to the Romans; "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead;" and in the book of the Acts the same apostle reasoning with heathens tells them, that "God left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

Now we might well have supposed beforehand that men in the world, with such mighty teachers

of God's wisdom and power constantly before them, could not have failed to know God; we might have supposed that the wonders of the earth, and of the sea, and of the sky, must have led them to adore with some just notions the Maker and Creator of them all. We might have supposed so beforehand, but alas, we know too well what is the history of mankind in its relation to God; it is one sorrowful, weary, and continued tale of misbelief, idolatry, devil-worship, sensuality, and sin. Yes, with all man's boasted wisdom this was the end of it all, in the midst of the works of the wisdom of God, yet "in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God." And remember that in looking back on the ages that are past, we are considering the history, not of uncivilized barbarians and rude savages, such as we meet with now in the extreme parts of the world, but of the most cultivated and highly polished nations that have ever been known on earth; nations that have left us works of genius and of intellect as yet unrivalled in the world; so that now in the present day, where we would study the best models, not merely of sculpture and of painting, but as well of poetry, of history, of logic, and of oratory, and almost every branch of literature, where do

we go back but to the mighty authors of ancient days, the giant geniuses of Greece and of Rome ! And yet, (strange, is it not ?) these men, with all their wisdom and gifts of intellect, with all the works of God's wisdom about them, yet by wisdom they knew not God.

What the exact faith of these philosophers may have been it is not easy to determine, but deeply plaintive are some of their expressions when they come to die, and one of them, one of the wisest and best, we find thus addressing his soul when about to depart ; " O my soul, so long the companion of the body, naked and cold, stripped of thy habitation, whither art thou going ? " But while the wisest and best were thus enveloped in darkness as to the very being of a God and their own future existence, the multitude of the people, we know, were universally given over to the basest superstition and worship of devils. They worshipped not merely the sun, and moon, and stars, but beasts, and serpents, and vile animals.

The characters of their own gods as given by themselves, are so hateful and abominable, that men of such vices would be reprobated from society : and their sacred rites were of such a nature, that purity of heart would be impossible

in any persons partaking in them. St. Paul has given us a picture of what the Gentile world was in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and we have ocular proof of the same, proof I mean not only of their ignorance of the most holy God, but of their frightful moral degradation, discovered in the remains of the Italian cities, cities destroyed by fire like Sodom of old, and for no less guilt; and yet these were men civilized and educated in all things concerning this life, and refined to a degree of luxury happily not yet attained in modern days. So true are the words of the apostle, that "in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, and therefore," he continues, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." You will observe here the foolishness of the preaching is put in opposition to the wisdom of God mentioned before; God had taught men by His wisdom the mighty and wonderful works of His wisdom, and they in all their boasted wisdom had not known Him; and therefore now He taught and saved them by foolishness, i. e. what appeared to them foolishness. And what is this foolishness? It is the doctrine of the incarnation and the cross, "the word of Christ," Jesus Christ and Him crucified; for I must observe that our translation

of the Bible (though I believe on the whole the best in the world) conveys a very imperfect idea of the meaning here. It is expressed "the foolishness of preaching," and conveys the idea that the foolishness consists in the act of preaching, whereas that is not the meaning; the expression "preaching," does not mean in the original the act of preaching, but the thing preached; in other words, it is the Gospel. So that in English the equivalent to the original would stand thus; that when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of the preaching, or the foolishness of the Gospel, to save them that believe. And why is it called foolishness? Plainly, because it appeared so to men. The cross was, St. Paul says, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." Did it not appear foolishness to such men, proud of their own wisdom, to tell them of a God made man, and suffering upon the cross? Did it not appear foolishness to them to send out twelve poor unlearned fishermen to teach such doctrines, and by these to cope with the mighty superstitions of ages, and to convert the world? It did indeed seem foolishness. We who have seen its miraculous and wonderful results can hardly conceive what foolishness it appeared to them.

But so it has been ; as the apostle said, “ the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men ; ” and with the weapon of His cross, a weak weapon as it appeared to men, like Samson of old with the jawbone of an ass, He has subdued the world, and wrought for men that salvation through faith, which by wisdom man could not or did not know.

And as it was of old, so it is now ; it is not through the wisdom of God, not through the knowledge of the external objects of nature, that men come to know God, but through Jesus Christ, through His incarnation and cross ; that is, in other words, it is not by reasonings but by revelation : it is not by philosophy, but by faith ; by the word of Christ dwelling in us richly in all wisdom, as St. Paul teaches us in the epistle for this day. Alas ! it is too evident that the most perfect attainments in science, i. e. learning in the wisdom of God, do not affect the heart (by themselves) in such a way as to bring it to the true knowledge of God. A saving knowledge of God is not a mere intellectual acquirement, and head knowledge, and power of reasoning ; it is that which affects the heart, and governs the appetites, and controls the temper, and

regulates the whole man, making him just, and truthful, and chaste, and unselfish, and patient, and affectionate, and good ; in short, it is that which makes man like to God. Now this saving knowledge of God is only to be obtained through Jesus Christ.

There are two methods, two roads as it were, by which men try to arrive at the knowledge of God ; the one is through the works of the creation, the wonders of the heavens and of the earth, the works of the wisdom of God ; men look out upon the objects of nature and think through the scientific pursuit and cunning intelligence of these to arrive at the true knowledge of God, and thus to improve and perfect mankind. But when they have through much labour and ingenuity effected this, when they have counted the number of the stars, and measured their distance from us, and from one another ; when they have taught us how light reaches our eyes, and how sound strikes upon the ear ; when they have mastered the very elements of wisdom, yoking the power of steam in bands, and calling out the secret powers of electricity and the magnet to do their will ; or when they have looked within us and studied the wonderful constitution of our bodies, the arteries,

veins, muscles, ligaments, and nerves, which display such amazing skill, and make us to be the fearful and wonderful beings that we are ; when they have studied all this and much more, have they by this learned to know and to love God ? Alas ! no. If they were devout men, of religious disposition before, they have indeed added to that religion knowledge which may make them wiser men and more useful and influential in their generation ; but if not, they have by their studies learned chiefly this, that God regulates the world by general laws ; which are indeed proofs of an infinite wisdom and skill ; but after all, general laws, however wise, do not affect the heart. For instance, we may see a steam engine contrived with the most wonderful skill for the benefit of man, and it moves us with great admiration and wonder, but it rouses none of those affections or dispositions of our nature which help to make us better. Well, something of the same sort takes place too often in the scientific pursuit of the works of the wisdom of God ; men learn to look upon the world as a sort of vast machine, and so their minds become occupied in the working of this system, and not in the adoration and love of Him who made and loves both it and them. Thus, we too often see in the present day

that learned men, i. e. men possessed of this learning, learning in the works of the wisdom of God, are men of a sceptical and irreligious turn of mind, men of ill-regulated lives and dispositions, vain, proud, self-trusting, arrogant, peevish, passionate, in a word, by all their learning not in any wise conformed to the image of God. We see that with the spread of scientific pursuit, there runs parallel, as it were side by side with it, a spread of scepticism and infidelity, and there is no class of men, as a class, more given to unbelief and fearful infidelity than our own (what are called) intelligent artisans ; all this is the constant daily illustration of the Divine word, that "the world by wisdom knoweth not God."

But there is another way through which we do arrive at the true and saving knowledge of God, and that is through the knowledge of Jesus Christ by faith.

When we see our God, as we do in the Gospels, loving us with so great and tender a love, like that of a parent towards his child,—God the Father sending His beloved Son, God the Son taking upon Him our nature with all its infirmities, sin only except, to suffer for us in the flesh, to save us and bring us to eternal joys with Himself—then it is that we begin to love God ; and to

love God is to know Him ; the knowledge of God is not like the cold light of the moon, which gives light but not heat, it is like the warm and vivifying ray of the sun, which gives light, and heat, and life.

The wisdom of this world knows not what love is ; it is founded in pride and exalts self ; “ We know that knowledge puffeth up.” But the knowledge of Jesus Christ is founded in humility, and therefore purifies the heart and exalts it towards God.

The Incarnation is God teaching humility. He who is the eternal Wisdom of the Father comes to us in the weakness of infancy, the child of Mary the carpenter’s spouse, that He (oh wondrous teacher !) may cast down in us every self-exalting thought, and build us on His own humility towards heaven. As the wise men came from the east to worship in adoring silence the babe Jesus, and there to learn true wisdom, even so must they who would learn true wisdom, still bow down their hearts in adoration before the mystery of His Incarnation.

Again, we know that in ourselves God has created an image of Himself, i. e. of His own perfection ; He made man in His own likeness, a likeness indeed now fearfully defaced and dis-

torted by sin, sin both original and actual. Man is now like a broken mirror, but still in that broken and shattered glass are reflected parts and portions of the image of God, which once he represented in perfection. Still in man is left the love, the admiration, the indelible impress of virtue, justice, benevolence, purity, goodness, beauty ; man's nature, corrupt as it is, what deep yearnings and aspirations has it yet after what is holy, and pure, and good, and free from sin ! Now in Jesus Christ this broken mirror we see again restored and made whole. In Him we see man restored again to the image of God ; we see man perfected, and God brought down to earth that we may know Him ; and thus, as the apostle says in very striking words, " We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yes, it is through the perfection of our nature, through those ideas of justice, virtue, benevolence, love, purity—perfected, those images of His own goodness which God has stamped upon our souls, that we come to know Him as He is, and to love Him ; and these we see, and as it were reach to, imperfectly in His saints, perfectly alone in Jesus Christ, in Him the Virgin-born, in Him who is

not only the truth and the life, but also the way.

Yet once more : the study of the works of the wisdom of God, of the external objects of nature, gives us the idea of great power and intelligence, but as we have said before, it is a power and wisdom which works by great general laws. The course of nature goes on like a great machine ; like a great mill-wheel ; and perhaps you or I, as individuals, may by some unlucky accident be crushed and tortured under that great wheel, but still it goes on, we are told, for the general good. And amidst the constant pains of this life, the throes of suffering humanity, can this cold doctrine ever satisfy man's yearning heart and make him know and love God ? Never. It may make him a cold stoic, may make him say, I must bear it, it can't be helped ; but it can do no more. But ah ! how different is that knowledge of God which we learn through Jesus Christ in the Gospels ! There we see Him, our God, as we have traced His course through the Gospels of this the season of His manifestation ; we see Him sympathizing with us in all our sufferings, not only partaking of our common humanity, being hungry, and weary, and faint, and sorrowful even unto death ; but we see Him having that distinguishing and separate

love for us one by one, for which our heart yearns. See Him with His mother and her friends at Cana, with the humble leper, the believing centurion, the fearful disciples, the afflicted demoniac, portioning out His mercies and His tender consideration exactly as it suited the case of each. Again, sitting at meat in the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus: Martha, we are told, in some fault, too much cumbered with the things of this life, but yet we are told, loved by Him, but Mary of heavenlier heart loved still more. Lazarus too, over whose grave He shed a brother's tears. Mark we too His conduct while on earth with His apostles, how He bare with their infirmities, jealousies, failings, and sins, teaching them as they were able to bear it, and leading them on to know Him more and more. See His distinguishing love towards them one by one, how He curbed the too hasty zeal of Peter; or let us see Him turning upon that same apostle in the hour of his temptation His face of sorrow; in the hall; amidst all that was doing to Himself, His eye was upon Peter's heart all the time. Or let us see Him receiving the apostle John to lie on His bosom, and to be called the disciple whom Jesus loved. Or again, let us mark His merciful and gentle bearing towards Thomas in the hour

of his unbelief ; “ Reach hither thy hand,” He said, “ and thrust it into My side, and put thy finger into the print of the nails.”

Ah, these are the things which move our hearts and teach us to love and to know God, when thus we know how He, all-wise and almighty as He is, can and does know us, and love us one by one. Yes, let the world go on with its knowledge as it will, and as has been foretold, “ many shall run to and fro, and wisdom shall be increased.” Be it our wisdom to know God in Jesus Christ ; and to this end, in order to obtain this, the Gospels must be to us a book of daily use, we must meditate daily, be it for ever so short a time, on the life of Jesus. There are those who go on from week to week, from Sunday to Sunday, with shut Bibles, and with hearts shut as well to all thoughts of Jesus Christ. Such men live in a poisoned atmosphere, I mean the atmosphere of this world infected with false maxims ; and neglecting the antidote, they necessarily become of the world, worldly. Others there are of better mind and more religious habits, who yet are dull and cold of heart, and live, as themselves are too conscious, without the love of Jesus. Now, surely one great reason of this is, the neglect of meditation.

If you would accustom yourself every morning to join to your morning devotions a short meditation on some part of the life of Jesus, or some saying of His recorded in the Gospels, not merely reading over a chapter and dismissing it as work done, but taking some short portion and grafting it on your mind by meditation, and at times through the day recalling it momentarily to mind, "letting the word of Christ" thus "dwell in you richly in all wisdom:" then would you by this, which the wise world still esteems foolishness, by this foolishness, I say, would you by God's grace attain, not suddenly, nor perhaps perceptibly to yourself, but gently, like the drops of water on the fleece of wool, that wisdom seeking which the restless world rushes to and fro in vain, that wisdom which is peace and steadfastness in the day of trouble, and hope and joy in the Holy Ghost, and the pledge, the earnest of life eternal; for "this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

HEAVENLY HAPPINESS.

1 ST. JOHN iii. 2, 3. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.*

WE all wish to go to heaven when we die; but have we considered what kind of a place heaven is? No doubt it is a very happy place: but, are we aware wherein its happiness consists? It may be, that with all its happiness, every one would not be happy there.

But what is the happiness of heaven? It is indeed impossible for us to form any thing like an adequate idea of it, both because it is so widely different from any thing we see on earth, and also doubtless because we have not faculties to comprehend the subject. Even if an angel were to come down and describe its glories to

us, we could have but a very poor and imperfect conception after all.

Yet some notion of it we may form—and it concerns us much to form the best we can. And even this, inadequate as it is, is sufficient to stir up the earnest longings and ardent desires of God's children, and to make them cry out in the Psalmist's words: "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee. . . For a day," that is, a single day, "in Thy courts is better than a thousand"—a thousand elsewhere. "I had rather be a door-keeper," hold the meanest office, "in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." David indeed was speaking of God's house below, His temple; but his words apply, and we can scarcely doubt but that he himself did also so apply them, to God's house above—heaven.

What then is the nature of that blessedness which God hath laid up for them that fear Him; which He hath prepared for them that trust in Him before the sons of men? Wherein does the happiness of heaven consist?

One way by which to form an idea of it, would be to compare heaven with earth: to let our minds dwell upon those circumstances in our present condition, which will have no place in heaven. For instance; in heaven there will be no suffering. Poverty, sickness; pain, unkind treatment, will find no entrance into its blessed abodes: sorrow and sighing will be at an end for ever: or, to use the beautiful imagery of Scripture, God "will wipe away all tears" from the eyes of every one who comes there. Thus we might go on through the whole catalogue of human trials; (and indeed this would be one way to turn such trials, when they come upon us, to good account; to let them bring heaven and its happiness more forcibly to our minds. Just as persons, who are away from a home which they love, find the recollection of it sweetened exceedingly by any troubles, or vexations, or disappointments, which they meet with during their absence.) Still, however, the notion of heaven obtained in this way is only negative; it enables us to conceive in a measure what heaven is not; but it does not help us much to understand what it is.

Have we then any positive information on the subject? Does Scripture tell us in what the hap-

pineness of heaven actually does consist? Yes. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Here then are two particulars: First, we shall see Christ as He is. Secondly, we shall be like Him. And these, if I mistake not, are nearly the sum and substance of the information which the Scriptures give us on the subject.

First, then, if we be admitted to heaven, we shall see Christ as He is. This is often spoken of as one of the special privileges which await us in the next world. I will gather together some of the passages which mention it: "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then, face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know, even as also we are known." "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-

angel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, ye may be also." "Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may see My glory." "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God." "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." "And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads."

Now from these passages it is not difficult to gather the meaning of the expression, "We shall see Him as He is;" although still our very high-

est conceptions must fall infinitely short of the reality.

One has heard of cases, in which the children of rich parents have, by some strange circumstances, been lost or stolen away while yet infants, and brought up as poor men's children, ignorant of the station to which they were born, and then after many years, restored to their parents, and acknowledged by them as their children. Now suppose that this had happened to a king's son: that such a one after having been brought up among poor people, without any idea but that he was one of themselves, were at length restored to his parents, owned by them, and received and treated as became his birth. Consider what would be the change in his circumstances. Hitherto he had known the king only by report. He had heard of him at a distance. He might have seen him at times as he passed along the streets attended by his guards in great pomp and splendour: but he had never been admitted into his presence; had never spoken to him or even heard his voice. Now he would dwell with him in his house; he would sit down with him at his table; he would be daily in his company; he would have free access to him when he would; he would converse with

him, he would associate with his friends ; and he would see his glory ; yea, and in some measure share it himself.

This then may perhaps give some idea of what is meant by seeing God as He is. We shall no longer know Him only by report ; our communications from Him and with Him will no longer be carried on by means of sacraments and other religious ordinances. No ; we shall have a nearer and closer access to Him. We shall be admitted into His presence. We shall dwell in His courts. We shall serve Him day and night in His temple. We shall be for ever with Him, enjoying the full sunshine of His favour, beholding His glory, and in some measure partaking of it ourselves.

This then is to see Christ as He is. They will be the best able to understand this blessedness, who are the furthest advanced in holiness, and the most under the influence of God's Spirit. " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit. Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they

are spiritually discerned : but he that is spiritual judgeth all things ;” he who is immersed in sin can have no conception of heavenly delights ; but the sober, serious, spiritually-minded Christian is enabled to form some idea of them, though after all, but a faint and imperfect one, compared with the blessed reality.

But, secondly, to be admitted into our Lord’s immediate presence, and see Him as He is, is not the whole of the blessedness of heaven. That a man may be happy anywhere, he must himself be suited to the circumstances in which he is placed. To go back to the story of the king’s son : suppose that the young man had had no other education than such as poor men’s children have : that he had kept no other company than that of poor persons. We can easily understand both how unfit he would be for the new situation into which he was going to be introduced, and also how little able to enjoy it. He might be pleased at first, with the thought of such high exaltation ; but, unless he learnt to accommodate himself to the circumstances around him, he would soon grow tired of forms and modes of behaviour to which he had been so little accustomed. He would be like a man at church, who had no heart in the service, and whose thoughts

were still running upon his worldly business ; everything would be a burden and a weariness to him.

Not only then, if we reach heaven, shall we see Christ, but we shall be like Him.

First ; we shall be like Him in our bodies. And truly what enjoyment could we have in heaven, if we were to carry thither the bodies which we have here on earth, bodies subject to disease and pain and suffering : bodies in fact which contain within them the seeds of death ? I ask any man who is afflicted with sickness or other bodily infirmity, what would heaven be to him, with the body which he now has ? Our bodies then shall be changed. They shall be made like Christ's body. "This I say, brethren," writes St. Paul, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I shew you a mystery : we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working

whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

Settle this then in your minds, my brethren, that if ever we reach heaven, these bodies of ours will undergo a mighty change, they will be made like Christ's body. We have most of us been in the dying chambers of our friends; we have watched their weakness and their pain; we have heard their groans and their hard breathing; and our hands have wiped away the cold drops that gathered upon their foreheads. And when at length the struggle was over, and they had sunk beneath the strong arm of death, we have seen how soon corruption seized upon its victims and forced us to bury our dead out of our sight.

But, were these our friends true and faithful servants of God? were they among the blessed dead which have died in the Lord? then think what a change awaits them. Our Lord Jesus Christ shall come down from heaven, and He shall call them from their graves, and He shall change their vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. When we laid them in the grave they were sown in dishonour, but they shall be raised in glory; they were sown in weakness, but they shall be raised in power;

they were sown a natural body, but they shall be raised a spiritual body ; here, they bore the image of their earthly forefather, hereafter they shall bear the image of their heavenly Saviour.

But we have another a nobler and better part than the body, and in this too we shall resemble our-Lord : we shall be like Him in our souls ; and herein most especially will the happiness of heaven consist. For how could we be happy there if we were to carry with us our evil and corrupt natures ? We see how it is even on earth : while a man's heart and affections are set on the world, how tedious does he think religion and religious employments ! What a burden is prayer ! how quickly he hurries over the short form which he is accustomed to use ! how wearisome a day is Sunday, if spent at all as God would have us spend it ! how strangely out of place would such a person find himself in heaven.

This then is another point, ever to be borne in mind, if we would form right notions of heavenly happiness, that if ever we reach those blessed mansions which Christ has gone to prepare for His people, we shall be like Christ, like Him in our souls ; sin shall not only no more have dominion over us, it shall be like the Egyptian

task-masters, over whom the Red sea waves had closed, we shall see it again no more for ever.

Let us take into our hands the history of our Lord and Saviour while on earth. Let us trace His life from His earliest infancy, to the time when He yielded it up for us upon the cross. Let us observe His entire devotedness to His Father's service, His love to His Father, His meek submission to His Father's will; how in fact He had no will but His Father's. Let us mark His boundless charity towards man, His patience and forbearance, His compassion and sympathy, His unwearied diligence in doing good. In these, we have set before us the pattern and exemplar which we shall hereafter copy into our own lives and conversations. I say we shall hereafter copy them: not that, if we are indeed Christ's true servants, we are not daily striving to copy them now, but that in our present state many things interfere to prevent us from attaining that full and entire accordance which we shall then reach; "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would;" but in heaven, this warfare will be at an end; the flesh will be wholly subdued, the spirit wholly victorious.

Thus then I have endeavoured to set before you the happiness of heaven, and wherein it consists. I have shewed you first, that (if we be indeed Christ's people) we shall see our Lord as He is. We shall dwell with Him for ever in His immediate presence, beholding His glory, and enjoying the most close and intimate communion with Him; and secondly, that as a necessary consequence, seeing that otherwise we cannot be fit for entering upon this state, we shall be like Him, like Him in our bodies, and like Him in our souls.

And now, if this be the nature and the happiness of heaven, what is our present business? Shall we live on in sin? Shall we take these bodies, which are to be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and defile them with drunkenness and debauchery? Shall we take these hands which are to be lifted up before the throne of God day and night, and soil them with theft and dishonesty, and ill-gotten gains? Shall we take these tongues which are to be employed in perpetual praises, singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, and profane them with oaths, or filthy language, or slander, or railing? Shall these hearts which are hereafter to send forth one perpetual stream of pure thoughts, and to overflow

with fervent love, and adoration, and zeal, and charity,—shall they now be well-springs of iniquity, filled full of vain and idle imaginations? God forbid! If we have this hope in us, we shall assuredly purify ourselves even as our Lord is pure.

Yes, my brethren, we may see from what has been brought before us, of the nature of heaven and heavenly joys, we may see plainly the indispensable necessity of that change of heart and life, of which the Scriptures speak so much. For nothing can bring home to us more forcibly the need there is of an entire change—an entire re-forming of our characters, than the consciousness that without it we could not any of us be happy in heaven, even if we could be admitted there; the consciousness that we have not that deep love of God, that overflowing affection for our Christian brethren which is the life of heaven, nor that pleasure in conversing with God now, being as it were in His presence in prayer, and meditation, and thanksgiving.

And yet this change must be wrought here, and these new likings in some good measure acquired here. However much the change wrought in or after death may remove hindrances to our love for God, and for His service; however much

it may perfect what has been before the real heart of our character and dispositions, we cannot expect that it will make us altogether different. The whole of Scripture is against any such a notion.

The work of sanctification must be begun here. It is vain to talk of being holy in heaven otherwise. We must here in this life be so changed by the grace of God, and so practised in religion, as that we may be learning at least to be with God, and practising beforehand, in our poor way, what is the employment and the blessedness of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. It is indeed for this very purpose that God has placed us in His Church; the Church is a nursery, a school, if we may so speak, in which God's children are being prepared for heaven; and to carry on the figure, the Holy Spirit is the teacher; it is His office to conform us to the image of Christ; it is our duty, our wisdom, to submit ourselves meekly, humbly, thankfully to His guidance and instruction, even till He have perfected in us the good work which He hath begun.

This then is our present business, to keep heaven constantly in view, and to give all diligence to fit ourselves for its holy and happy em-

ployments. Here on earth we shall still have abundance to contend with: an evil heart within, and a seducing world without; but God is on our side. The Holy Spirit is promised to all who seek His aid in His name. And with His help we shall surely triumph; the day will soon be here; oh, happy and most glorious day, when every conflict shall be over: when we shall be ushered into the presence of our Lord: there to see Him as He is: to be perfectly conformed to His image: to behold His glory, and to abide with Him for ever.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SEPTUAGESIMA.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

ST. MATTHEW XX. 14. *Take that thine is and go thy way ; I will give unto this last even as unto thee.*

A LANDHOLDER had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. He fenced it well, cleared it, and planted it with the choicest vines. He furnished it with all things needful for its cultivation, and then went forth to hire labourers to work in it. It was the early morn when he first went forth, and agreed with the workmen for the usual wages, a Roman penny a day. Three times more, after every three hours, He went out again ; and all that He found idle He sent into His vineyard. At last when it was now only one hour from sunset He went out for the last time, and sent to the work some that were still unengaged. Then when the evening was come He began with the last and paid them all alike : and to one who murmured because he had received no more for

working twelve hours than they received who worked but one, He answered, "Take that thine is and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee."

Such is the parable set forth to us by St. Matthew, as you have already heard in the gospel for this morning. To-day is Septuagesima Sunday, that is, about the seventieth day before Easter, and we change to-day from the rejoicings and festivities of Christmas and Epiphany to prepare for the penitence and fasting of Lent. Some lessons suitable to such a change the Church evidently intended us to learn from the parable before us; let us try to understand, then, its meaning.

The landholder is Christ, the master of the house, who has the utmost parts of the earth for His possession; His vineyard is His Church now extending through the world, but once confined to Israel and the hill of Sion; He has fenced it with rules and marked it off from the rest of mankind by sacraments and holy rites; and furnished it with all things needful to make it bring forth the fruits of holiness. We and all who have ever been brought within its bounds are the labourers whom He hires. So far all is simple and plain: the rest of the interpretation

varies with the different meanings we give to the day in which it is said the householder went so often forth. He went out early in the morning, we are told, at the sixth and ninth hours, and at the eleventh, of some one day: that is, He went out at the beginning, towards the end, and at stated intervals during the course of some particular period. Now what is that period? It seems to mean three things:

1. The times of the earlier dispensations;
2. The period of the Christian dispensation;
3. The duration of the life of each of us.

According to these three explanations of what the day means, the whole parable seems to get three different applications: different but not inconsistent, all three being very much the same in themselves, but referred to different objects: all three bending towards one and the same point—all three teaching one and the same lesson—viz.: that God gives religious knowledge and spiritual help to whomsoever He pleases, and is not bound by any merit or work of ours, nor tied to any particular time. To those that serve Him zealously and as thoroughly as they can, let it be for never so short a time, He can if He pleases give His bounty as liberally as to those who have worked for Him all their lives. He is debtor

to no man, He judges not according to man's judgment; some whom we have thought little of on earth we may find thought much of in heaven; we ourselves who have been lifted up here, may find ourselves brought down hereafter. Man pays his fellow according to the quantity or quality of the work done; God, on the contrary, most of all regards not how much, but how heartily, His servants labour. Happily it is the willingness of the worker, not the greatness of the work, that measures the reward God bestows, else there were little reward for any of us. This then seems the general meaning of the parable, that God claims a perfect liberty to give whatever He pleases to whomsoever He pleases. We must not complain if He gives us only our hire, because He gives more than his hire to another, or He will say to us, "Take that thine is and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee." This seems, I say, the general meaning; let us see how it agrees with the three different applications of the parable already mentioned.

1. If we take the day to mean the whole time of the earlier dispensations, and especially of the Jewish dispensation:—according to the saying of Isaiah, "the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts

will be the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant ;” the morning when He went out early will be the first times of the world, as those of Seth and of Noah the preacher of righteousness. The other hours will be the times from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses through the days of the judges, the kings, and the prophets ; and then at the eleventh hour Christ Himself came to bring the gentiles into the Church, and reward them as well as the Jews with the benefits of the gospel. Then was heard the murmuring of the Pharisees : they had long borne the burden of the law, they had laboured anxiously and wearily beneath its oppressive rule, and now they were discontented that any, who till lately had been publicans and sinners, should be as highly honoured in God’s kingdom as themselves. And not only the Pharisees, the strictest sect, but all the Jews were dissatisfied when they saw Samaritans and Gentiles made equal to them, and like the first hired labourers were ready to refuse the bounty altogether if they must share it equally with men whom they thought so inferior in desert. But with Christ there was no respect of persons :—lost sheep of the house of Israel, or gentile dogs, all were to come at last into one flock, till there was one

fold and one shepherd; the Pharisee had no superior claim, the gentiles had no incapacity, to enter in and find pasture: both fared alike. Christ gave unto this last even as unto the first.

2. Again, if we take the day to signify the period of the Gospel dispensation, we shall find the same liberty as before exercised by God. The vineyard is still the Church of Christ; those hired in the morning are the apostles and early Christians, who had to bear the heat of persecution and the burden of establishing everywhere a new religion. The different hours afterwards are of course particular times since them, at which God has either by His ministers, His mercies, or His judgments, called men back into the Church. And by the eleventh hour is represented this latter age, when persecutions and distresses having come to an end, we have no danger to brave, and less trouble to endure, as members of Christ's body. Yet we are not on that account to lose our reward. It is indeed true that they who then suffered death or imprisonment for their Lord's sake, shall be acknowledged by Him when He comes with His holy angels. The crown of martyrdom is doubtless a bright one; and our Lord did indeed declare to St. Peter and his companions, "Verily, I say unto you, that ye

which have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Yet, late as we are, quiet as are our times, little as the service of Christ seems to cost us; though we have to work but one hour, and that in the cool of the evening, our Lord may if He please give unto us even as unto them. Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for His name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. For many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

3. And once more, if we take the day to denote the life of each one of us, still those that are called at the eleventh hour may receive as much as any who have been called at an earlier time.

When the morning of life dawned upon us, and we were too helpless, as infants, to come to Christ of ourselves, it may be some of us were kept from His call in baptism by the sin of their parents, or by the neglect and error of their relations. So they lived on without working for Him until the third hour came, and they were grown from infancy up to youth. Still perhaps

they were kept from hearing His voice or listening to His invitation ; and thus they hastened on from childhood to mid-day strength, and from mid-day strength to the afternoon of their day, until the ninth hour passed away, and they were still unoccupied in the service of their Redeemer. Others, although baptized, have perhaps been suffered to live as if no vows had been made for them. They have never been told, poor unpitied souls, of the blessed reward held out to the "good and faithful servant ;" never of the help and grace already vouchsafed to them, nor of those further gifts Christ has in store for them in His Church's ordinances ; never of the conditions they have promised to fulfil, the renunciation of sin, the maintenance of the faith, the loving obedience to God's commands. At home, or in the places of their daily occupations, or amidst the haunts of their companions, there is no one, it may be, to trace up the unhappiness and dreariness of their hearts to its true source, their ignorance of God ; none to help them in resisting temptation ; none to encourage them in treading the narrow way. Others again, perhaps, baptized and well instructed in their duty to their Lord, are still idle ; not because they have never been engaged to work, nor yet because they know not

how, but because they lack the will. The pleasures of society fill their thoughts; or they are occupied with plans or with endeavours to push their way beyond their present condition; or they are wholly bent upon some pleasing pursuit, innocent perhaps in itself, but savouring not at all of heaven; or mere indolence prevails over every better desire. In some way or other the love of themselves or of the world draws them back from the hearty unreserved dedication of themselves to Christ. They cannot make up their minds once for all, deliberately and firmly, to "seek first the kingdom of God;" they will not sit down and count the cost of a consistently religious life, and fix their resolve to take the first decided step in it.

But the eleventh hour may now be stealing on all; our life may be drawing swiftly to its close; the night may be coming in which no one can work. Now then at any rate, if never before, the invitation of the householder is given to you. He asks, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" And what will you answer Him? You cannot say that no man hath hired you any longer. You cannot after to-day pretend that no one has called you to serve Christ. For I now call you; I now bid you in His behalf to begin your work for Him. You need be at no loss where to find it.

The study of His holy word, meditation, self-examination, penitent confession ; the duties of daily public and private prayer, frequent communion, any labour that may make the house or service of God more beautiful, more glorious, more attractive, will give you an opportunity for direct work for Him. The poor about your door, the schools in your neighbourhood, the members of your own family, all who either in body or in spirit stand in need of your kindly help, will shew you how you may minister to Christ Himself, in doing it to one of the least of His brethren. The management of your own temper, the crucifixion of the flesh, the acquirement of patience, humility, obedience, charity, and their sister graces, will open you a way of labouring for Christ and for yourselves at once.

Say not "it is of no use now, we have gone on too long in idleness to become active workers now." I quite agree with you that it is hard for sinners who have long served themselves only, to change and serve their Lord. I confess that it is a tremendous undertaking for the hardened liar to become truthful ; for the grey-headed drunkard to turn sober ; for the habitual swearer to become clean-tongued ; for one who has grown old in uncleanness to become pure,

or for the practised thief to grow honest. I acknowledge that with men this is impossible, but not with God; ninety-nine such sinners may be cast away—but there is yet a hundredth saved; and oh, happy hope! each one of you who have hitherto lived in unholy habits, may be that single, yet that blessed penitent. There is a charm indeed, about those who have had a life-long love of Christ, that one who has been a great sinner can never win, let him be never so sorry for his fault. There is a quietness about one who has been long the Lord's servant, a cheerfulness of temper, a refreshing simplicity, a steady calmness, which none other can ever obtain. He who in childhood has been a stranger from God bears for ever about him some marks of having served abroad; yet if he return, however late, he may win favour from God and happiness for himself. Not in the cradle only, but also on the edge of the grave, God's power can save us, and His goodness make us glad. Though we be the very last among His labourers, yet He may give unto us even as unto the first; it is still lawful for Him to do what He wills with His own: it is still possible to obtain from Him grace to repent, and then we need not doubt of His pardon.

The reference of this subject to the season on which we enter to-day, it is not very hard to find. We are, as I said before, to prepare to-day for our Lent fast; now the best preparation for that, whether we be old or young, whether it be now the eleventh hour or only dawn of day with us, is to repent us of our idleness, to enter Christ's vineyard, and to set to work there in earnest.

It may be that some of you who have been brought up all your lives in the Church, have yet never thought that you were placed in it for this very purpose. You have been at ease perhaps, all things by God's mercy have gone smoothly with you: no trouble, no sickness, no sorrow has come upon you. The quiet of the Church in these latter times has found a likeness in the quietness of your own lives. Now though a life of poverty and disappointment and suffering, is certainly a safer life for the soul than such a one of prosperity; yet, God forbid that any one should think that the prosperous must therefore be inferior in sanctity to those that are stricken with grief. They have not borne, it is true, the heat and burden of the day, but yet they may be such as to deserve the full reward. Success comes from God as well as trouble, and brings

with it its own temptations. Take care then not to be deceived by the apparent tranquillity about you. Your very existence in the Church is permitted only because you are "labourers." What labour, then, are you employed in? What are you doing for the vineyard? Unless you can point to some proofs of your work, not necessarily such as others can take note of, but such as are known to your own consciences; unless you can shew something before God by which the workman may be known, you cannot expect surely to get any hire. Would you pay a labourer for sitting still in your field? Why then, unless you be labouring in some real, though it may be in the humblest, least noisy way, should Christ reward you? Let us make up our minds then to-day, to get as soon as we may into some way of working for Him who has bought us. Let us determine not to start in another week without being able to ask His blessing on some work we have begun for Him. And for those who know that they have not wished to be idle; who perhaps, by God's blessing, may already be able to see some fruit of their toil; this parable has yet a very useful lesson. If they would wish to keep the coming season strictly, if they would learn to weigh themselves as God will weigh

them, let them regard not so much what they have done, as how they have done it. Let them look at the motives which led them to their work, and the feelings which keep them at it. Pride and self-reliance, the love of human praise and much admixture of earthly passions, may be at the bottom of all that they have done. Let them pray, and watch over themselves that such be not the case; let them humble themselves, and beware that they have not an evil eye. Let them not feel indignation, if others, whom they fancy less active, less deserving than themselves, be rewarded with an equal or a greater hire. It is by God's gift that they have laboured more abundantly, if it be so. To whom is the praise then due? Why should they boast of having borne the burden and heat of the day, when it is the householder Himself who has enabled them to do so? Why should their obedience be more acceptable than that of the latest called? Why because it has been already blessed more on earth, should it be also more remunerated in heaven? "Take that thine is and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee."

But if even those who are rightly labouring need such caution, what shall we say of them

who are not merely idlers but active workers of mischief? Are we sure that this is not the case with some of us? Are we certain that by our ill lives, our evil words, our careless and loose ways of thinking, we are not actually injuring the vineyard we were sent to improve? If we are doing this, now is the time to change : now when we are invited to repent, to fast, to start afresh in our labour of love. Oh what a pattern we might set in this country, lax as men are for the most part in it, and slovenly in religious duties, if we would but keep ourselves in order by the Church's rules. Let us try to do this more and more strictly as each season returns : let us try for His sake whom we profess to love, for His sake whose labourers we call ourselves, whose servants indeed, in any case, we are ; to live together an united household, an orderly and devout family, kindling one another to devotion and every good work, curbing our own tempers, overlooking one another's faults, setting before us that heavenly home where high and low, the skilful and the ignorant, the happy and the afflicted, the young and the old, the innocent and the repentant, shall all meet as equals, shall each receive the same hire, shall each rejoice in the presence and in the favour of Him whom we

have served: shall each be fixed in the place, that God of His free grace shall regard us as deserving, when many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SEXAGESIMA.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DENIAL.

2 COR. xi. 27. *In fastings often.*

As we approach the time of Lent, the great season of fasting set apart by the universal Church at once for commemorating our Lord's fast of forty days for our sakes, and for humbling and training ourselves, the Epistles turn our thoughts beforehand to this subject. Last Sunday we heard St. Paul declaring that he kept under his body and brought it into subjection, lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway: this Sunday we have an account of how he so kept under his body, even by every species of self-denial, by fastings often, by hunger and thirst, watching, and cold, and weariness. It is not my purpose at present to speak of that particular kind of self-discipline called fasting. I wish at this time to say a few words upon the principle of self-denial in general.

I suppose few will dispute that the will re-

quires some training as well as the mind and disposition; and as few perhaps will deny that the surest way to spoil the will, to make it headstrong and obstinate, would be to let it always have its own desires, of whatever sort they might be. Most men confess that they must put some restraint upon it, must keep in even their wishes from what is unlawful. Now this is the whole principle of self-denial. It consists in denying ourselves lawful things in order that we may so break in our will and get the mastery over it, as to prevent its ever leading us on to do what is forbidden. Few persons, I say then, deny the principle of self-denial, but the method of practising it, its great and paramount importance, its inseparable connexion with true devotion, is perhaps in general not sufficiently understood. For instance, men read in Scripture that they should be temperate, honest, and charitable; they believe themselves to be such as is required; they are naturally sober and moderate; they have no temptation to cheat their neighbours; they are benevolent and kind-hearted to all. But there comes every now and then across them a text that puzzles them and makes them sad, "Unless a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me, he

cannot be My disciple." Such are our Lord's own words: they must mean something. What is it they do mean? What is implied by a man denying himself? How is he to take up his cross and follow his blessed Master? These are questions which their habits and education make some very well-intentioned persons utterly unable satisfactorily to answer. Let us see if we can in some part supply them with a reply.

First, then, it is to be observed that self-denial evidently does not mean abstaining from things unlawful. The Christian ought unquestionably to do that. Who could call a man self-denying merely because he was not a thief, nor unchaste, nor drunken. Honesty, chastity, temperance, justice, and such like virtues, were and are practised by heathens: of course then they must be strictly observed by one "who has been brought out of darkness into marvellous light." No: we are not merely to avoid what is sinful in itself; but we are even to keep back ourselves from things lawful. Of all things lawful for us, some our heart may tell us are not expedient: they may be dangerous, as bringing us near to what is unlawful; they may be hurtful, as making us weak and self-indulgent. We shall impose upon ourselves as it were a bye-law, there-

fore, by which these things also will be prohibited. Within the circle of imperative duties we shall inscribe a circle of voluntary self-restraint. According to the suggestion of the pious Bishop Wilson, "Every day deny yourself some satisfaction ; your eyes, objects of mere curiosity ; your tongue, everything that may feed vanity, or vent enmity ; the palate, dainties ; the ears, flattery, and whatever corrupts the heart ; the body, luxury ; bearing all the inconveniencies of life (for the love of God,) with patience, and resignation to the will of God."

But though self-denial be thus self-imposed, we must not suppose that it must therefore be self-sought. Such is the strange reluctance of the will to submit, that even in denying ourselves we often seek to take our own way. As we may be proud of being in some points humble, so we may encourage a self-pleasing spirit in the very choice of how we shall mortify ourselves. It is safer, therefore, not to go out of our way merely to deny ourselves, but only to take that way which our experience of ourselves, and of our own failings or dangers, or love for others, or the circumstances in which God's providence places us, open out to us. To take our course indeed of our own accord, but not by our own

fancy. According to a devout exposition of our Lord's words to St. Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, young beginners gird themselves, but old saints take the occasions of self-denial which others put upon them.

Our obedience, as we all are glad to acknowledge, should be that not of a slave to his master, but of a son to his loving father. Shall we then be content with simply keeping ourselves from making Him angry? Shall we not have a desire to meet, nay to anticipate, His wishes? We shall serve willingly, not by force; and knowing well what He has voluntarily suffered for us, we shall not be afraid, when occasion offers, of suffering in like manner for Him. Self-denial then is a voluntary act, done for our own good, or in the exercise of a penitential spirit, or from its appearing to be most according to the will of Him whom we love.

Now then apply these rules to the ordinary conduct of life. Take some taste or inclination not in itself at variance with Christian duty, and restrict yourself in its indulgence. Take the round of your daily pleasures, or business, or engagements, and you will find something they seem to offer wherein you may go against your own wishes; you may do something which you

would otherwise leave undone ; you may refuse something which you would otherwise choose, for the sake of breaking in your own will, and for the love of God. But such a step will be something more than a mere breaking in of our will ; it will be a great help to us in performing the other portion of our Lord's command, "to take up our cross and follow Him." Each one has his own peculiar cross, as it has been often acknowledged. God puts some yoke or other on each of us, whether he be willing to receive it or not, some weight He forces us to carry about with us perhaps all our lives. But here we have something further implied. We are not only to bear what God puts upon us, but we are to take up our cross ourselves. It is to be, as I said, a voluntary act ; we might omit it, but the true Christian will surely not omit it. God points to it, the Christian lifts it up, because God's will is his will, God's nod a sufficient command for him. God points to it, I say ; but let none therefore think that because they may not at once discern His pointing, therefore Christ does not mean them to exercise self-restraint at all.

Let the feeling but exist, you may trust it to find some means before long of displaying itself. And indeed the common course of life generally

offers abundant opportunity of practising self-denial even the most severe. The danger is, not that we shall find no way of manifesting our devotion, but that we shall have no devotion to manifest.

But, secondly, to what extent should this self-denial be carried? If we are not always to do what we wish, even when our wishes are innocent, where are we to stop? must we do nothing for our pleasure? take no thought whatever for our own comfort? These are questions which no one can well answer for another. If, as has been shewn, self-denial is a voluntary act, and to be exercised in all those minute particulars that make up the daily life of each of us, the extent or even the kind of it cannot be specially prescribed by anybody not acquainted with these particular opportunities, and aware of our willingness to use them. Christ asked the sons of Zebedee, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Their answer might have been, *No*: and they would have merited no punishment. They answered, "We are able," and they won their Lord's praise and a high reward. As has been already hinted, however, the rules we may

make for ourselves in these matters are to be made cautiously, lest we rather foster than weaken the obstinacy of our self-will.

We must have some good reason for each specific rule. The first is, that which will assist us most in overcoming our own besetting sin. The abstaining from delicate food, or from such books or society as we have found any way dangerous to us; the guarding the eye, the turning away the thoughts from such subjects as strengthen the power of our passions, or link us more closely to the world. Then again in whatever may be anywise painful to others, or lessen love and harmony, whatever the wants of the Church, or the claims of the poor, or the arrangements and habits of our home, or the dangers and oppositions we may have to encounter, or the restraints of business, or the general course of God's dealings with us, seem to point out as calling for acts of willing mortification, we should in the first place regard. Much also may be learned from the suggestions which holy men have given to us on this subject. The study of their lives and writings will often suggest the very methods of self-discipline which we feel at once would be suitable to ourselves. Or we may be much aided by the advice of

one who knows exactly our state and position. Lastly, we must consider the particular opportunities we have, and what our homes, the wishes of our friends, our health, and other similar circumstances, seem to make advisable. Obedience to any or to all of these guidances will prevent our self-denial from being wilful, though it will still be willing. We shall not make nor choose the yoke for ourselves, but gladly bow the neck to bear it when thus found. It is a good rule, however, to begin moderately. One step you will find lead on to another: when we have climbed one hill that seemed very steep to us once, we shall see others still more difficult before us, and we must give ourselves briskly to surmount them. But if you attempt too much at first, be sure your resolution will fail you, and you will give up the whole as useless to your sanctification, perhaps as a piece of enthusiasm or an impossibility. But choose out one inclination at first; say for instance, the reading entertaining books; deny yourself in regard to this amusement, and give the time you would spend upon it to works of mercy. One victory over yourself, though in so small, so indifferent a matter, will make other victories, and those more important, easier, and more sure.

Remember always what your object is : you desire to be the disciple of your blessed Master. He has told you, and St. Paul has confirmed the lesson by his example, that in order to be His disciple you must deny yourself. The duty is imperative—you may not trifle with that ; but the way of performing it is left to your own conscience ; and you have the satisfaction, the great blessedness, of reflecting that no act done to please God, no work, be it ever so unimportant, done in the name of Christ, shall lose its reward. Submit yourselves, then, I pray you, to the discipline of a watchful self-denial, it will make you more hardy for the battle you have here to carry on with many a foe ; it will fit you for the banquet hereafter to be spread for you with the saints and with the Lamb ; it will secure to you, through the mercy and merits of Christ Jesus, the happy privilege of being counted one of His faithful followers in that day, when no one will feel that he has served God too much or too dearly, but all will have to regret that they did not serve Him more, and at a greater cost.

In laying so much stress on the necessity of exertion and watchfulness, in order successfully to carry on the work of self-discipline, I must guard myself from being misunderstood in one

important point. For human works human efforts may often be, at least for a while, enough. A man who would rise to eminence in a worldly pursuit, trusts to his own energies and industry ; and success, though it may do him no real good because it lacks God's blessing, is the result, according to a law of God's providence, either of greater labour, or of his higher abilities. He is dependant on no one so much as on himself. His own head or his own hands make, as men say, his fortune. But the case is far different in regard to our spiritual progress. He who seeks a closer communion with God ; he who wishes to serve Him more entirely ; to devote himself more completely ; to make not only the letter of the law, but its spirit, his rule of conduct, requires it is true, the use of all his own energies to the purpose, but he requires also far more than that. He looks to God for assistance to carry his efforts into effect ; success is indeed hopeless without his utmost endeavours, but it is also hopeless with them, if they be not aided by God's continual help. The devil will have a hold in the heart of every one, unless it be pre-occupied by God's Spirit, and even then the strife between good and evil powers within him will be constant. The Spirit is, however, thanks

to our blessed Redeemer, the birthright of every Christian. Made sons of God in baptism, we gain the first-fruits of the Spirit for our inheritance; and though by many this precious inheritance is despised; though by many this glorious gift is utterly neglected, still we may also recover its use by fervent seeking, and on it we may constantly rely for effectual aid, for sufficient and more than sufficient assistance. Let us not then neglect this grand duty either out of forgetfulness of its importance, or fear of failing in its performance. Let us undertake it with a holy determination, and leave the result to God, who has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Let us not call it unnecessary when the Church prescribes it; let us not think it impossible when God has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" let us not dare to term it superstitious, unless we be prepared to call that superstition which Christ has commanded and Paul has practised.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

QUINQUAGESIMA.

LOVE OF GOD THE LIFE OF LENT.

1 COR. xiii. 3. *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

THE Church in her services to-day teaches us of love—charity is love. In common conversation we use the word charity for the giving of alms, but in Scripture language it means love—love to God and love to man. We stand upon the brink of Lent to-day. It is the last Sunday before Lent. Ash-Wednesday is near at hand, and with it the severer duties of religion, mortification, fasting, penitence. Yet there is such a thing, as holy Scripture warns us, as “fasting for debate and strife:” there is such a thing as “bowing down our head like a bulrush,” and yet not being “acceptable to the Lord:” there is such a thing as obeying the outward rule of mortification and abstinence, and all the time

neglecting to restrain our own peevish tempers and wayward dispositions. To-day then we are taught of love; to-day we pray for love in order that we may learn, or at least may heartily desire, to enter on these stricter duties in the spirit of love, otherwise they will not please God. It will not profit us to go for forty days into the wilderness if we go not with Jesus Christ. "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

What then is this gift of charity? What is this divine love? without which all the other good gifts of God are imperfect, yea, are but "as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal?"

Alas, my brethren, how can we explain it? How can we speak of it? If even the lower gifts of God are often beyond our words, how much more the highest and best? Love alone can comprehend love. The Holy Ghost, who giveth love, alone can make us understand what love is. Yet we must ask if we would have, we must seek if we would find, we must knock if we would have the door opened to us. Knock we then to-day at the door of grace, if by any means it may be granted to us to comprehend this most excellent gift of charity.

Now I suppose that one of the errors which we commonly make, and which hinders us much from a right comprehension of divine love, i. e. I mean the love we owe to God, is that in our regards to Him we are often content to substitute gratitude for love. We know how God the Father loved us in that He sent His Son to save us; we know how Christ, our Saviour, loved us in that He took upon Him our flesh and bore the pain and shame of the cross for us. Yet all the time are we not disposed to look upon these as mercies that took place a long time since? Once our Saviour was upon earth, the man of sorrows; once He hung upon the cross for us in agony. And, oh, how can we remember these things but with gratitude! How can we think of all that He endured for us sinners and for our salvation and not be moved! How can we look upon the cross and not exclaim in our inmost heart, "If I forget Thee, then let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!" Yet wholesome and holy as such thoughts are, deeply as they move our hearts, still I think by themselves they cannot raise us further than the grace of gratitude. We look back in them too much as *past* acts, and forget to unite them with *present* acts of love. We

remember our Saviour's great love to us *then*, do we remember that the same is present to us still? Do we not, my brethren, if I may use such an expression, think rather of a dead than of a living Christ? I mean do we not go back to what He once did for us until we lose sight of that other equally great truth that "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," that "He is present with us alway," or as it ought to be more literally expressed, "every day," "until the end of the world?"

It is, I think, partly owing to this want of a living regard towards an ever-present and living Saviour, that our hearts are so dull, so little warmed with real love, so seldom rising at the best beyond an affection of gratitude. Our blessed Lord Himself has taught us to make use of figures and parables; bear with me then, my brethren, while I endeavour to set this truth more vividly before you by means of an illustration.

Let us suppose then the case of a little child that in its infancy fell into some great peril. The room in which it slept was in flames and it must have perished miserably, but that the father in his great love, heedless of the certain danger, entered the burning chamber, folded his child to

his bosom, and bore him safe and unhurt through the fire, but himself died in consequence from the injuries he received. Well, as this child grew up and came to years of understanding, his mother would constantly impress upon his mind what his father had done for him, that he was not only the author of his existence, but had died for him, had died to save him. And surely this child as he grew up would regard his father's memory with the strongest affection, and would recall often to his mind what his father had done and suffered for him, and would cherish the recollection of this in his heart; yet after all it would be a regard for his memory—a real and true affection I do not deny—but not a living love; it would be gratitude, not love.

Let us suppose now that this same child was attacked with severe sickness, and as it lay tossing on its bed in sleepless unrest, one hand, a mother's hand, was ever ready to smooth its pillow and moisten its parched lips, one loving eye, a mother's eye, ever near to meet its upturned gaze, as it looked round imploring help, and assure it of a love that would never leave nor forsake it. More than all the nurse's care and physician's skill, more than its daily food, more than life itself to that little child is then

its mother's love. It lives upon that love, and in return it loves. Yes! this is not gratitude, it is a living love.

And now, oh my brethren, measure we our affections by this rule. Do we thus love Jesus Christ? Do we thus look to Him constantly as an ever-present, living, and loving Saviour? In all our difficulties is He the guide in whom we trust? In all our darkness is He our light? In all our trials is He our refuge? In all our sorrows is He alone the comforter to whom we look? Blessed are they who know what it is thus to love Jesus. But how can we learn this love? Oh, my brethren, I myself should be the first to ask how can we learn this love? One step towards it will be to study to realize more His living presence with us; to think of Him, to adore Him, not only as a Saviour who once died for us, but as One who ever lives, loves, and daily blesses us. And that we may be enabled to do this, let us now and often think

1. Of His gifts to His Church.
2. Of His special gifts to ourselves.

And first of the gifts of His presence to His Church.

When we were little children we were taken to be baptized; we did not choose this for ourselves, but God chose it for us; as it is written,

“Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” Jesus Christ was then first present to us. He did not only wash us with water; He washed us in His blood, for He gave us then the forgiveness of our sins; He gave us His Holy Spirit; it was His minister who baptized us outwardly; it was Jesus Christ Himself who truly washed us: for what His ministers rightly do in His name and by His command, those things He Himself doeth.

When we were confirmed, provided only we came in sincere purpose, it was (oh solemn and yet joyful thought!) Jesus Christ Himself who laid His hands upon us. For not in his own name, not in man's name or authority, but in the name and in the authority of Jesus Christ, His minister the bishop spoke those words to us, and laid his hand upon us. Seen outwardly it was the bishop's hand; seen by faith it was that Hand which was marked with the print of the nails.

And oh! if after this we have sinned against Him and grieved His Holy Spirit; yet still He is not far from us to move us to repentance and to forgive us. When He was upon earth He put not sinners from Him. He said with His own lips to the penitent woman, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” And still upon earth He forgives sins; still He moves to penitence and then absolves.

For those absolutions which He gives to the penitent by His ministers are His own absolutions, and in His holy Church still there is the forgiveness of sins.

Yet once more ; when we kneel in Holy Communion to receive His best and greatest gift to us—who is it that feedeth us there ? It is His minister that feedeth us outwardly with bread and wine, but it is Himself who feedeth us inwardly from His wounded side with His own flesh and blood. For “the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? the cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ?”

These are infinite consolations, and assure us of Christ’s presence with us still, of His present living love. So that we need not say in our heart, “Who shall ascend into heaven ? (that is, to bring down Christ from above :) or who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)” For He is very nigh thee.

And this assurance of His living presence and love to us is greatly confirmed when we look back on our past life and consider the special mercies which He has vouchsafed to us. Surely there is not any one among us who is arrived at the years of manhood, and has learned in any

measure to know himself, but must in reviewing his past life be conscious to himself of a guiding hand which has upheld him in the way, and directed his devious footsteps with wondrous mercy.

Look back on the season of thy youth, the days of awakening passion and strong temptation, and say, who kept thee then from perishing in sin? When the ways of the world seemed bright and pleasant to thee; when her voice was as the voice of a charmer in thine ears; when thou longedst to taste of forbidden pleasure, and wouldest fain have followed in her train; who was it that then restrained thee? What merciful hand of love was it that held thee back in spite of thy very self? Or when thou hadst sinned and broken the bands of early discipline, and lost the innocence of childhood and thy purer conscience, when Satan had entrammelled thee, and thou wert living almost in the midst of actual sin; what mercy was it that still held thee back from utterly hardening thine heart and wholly forsaking thy God? What tender pity was it that bore with thee because it still saw in thee the spark of life? What love was it that breathed on that faint spark, that kept alive in thee the fears of the worm that never dieth, and

the fire that is not quenched ; that wakened in thee thoughts of remorse and shame, until, oh joy ! it at length brought thee to a true repentance ?

Thou knowest, and thou alone, what secret strivings have since then been in thy heart ; what doubts, what fears, what encouragements, what solemn warnings, and what awakening calls.

Right sure I am that there is no one who knoweth himself, who knoweth his past life, but knoweth also of a love so manifold, so wondrous, that it passeth knowledge. "Thou, O God, hast taught me from my youth up until now, therefore will I tell of Thy wondrous works. Thy righteousness, O God, is very high, and great things are they that Thou hast done ; O God, who is like unto Thee ! O what great troubles and adversities hast Thou shewed me, and yet didst Thou turn and refresh me, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again. Thou hast brought me to great honour, and comforted me on every side. Therefore will I praise Thee and Thy faithfulness, O God, playing upon an instrument of music ; unto Thee will I sing upon the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel."

"What shall I render unto Thee, my God," says St. Augustine in his Confessions, "for that my memory recalls these things and yet my soul

is not afraid? I will love Thee, O my God; I will give thanks unto Thee; I will confess to Thy name, for that Thou hast forgiven my evil and wicked deeds. To Thy grace I impute it, and to Thy pity, for Thou hast made my sins to melt away as ice. To Thy grace also I impute whatever evil deeds I have not done."

Let us take with us some such thoughts as these, my brethren, that we may learn to love God, to love Him more and better, for love is born of love. "We love Him because He first loved us." We cannot make ourselves love Him by exciting our feelings, but adoring His love to us we may gather some portion of its light and heat to our own dull cold hearts.

Let us take with us such thoughts as we enter into Lent, for love is the salt of the sacrifice; it is love that seasoneth every good work that we offer to our God. Above all, let us beware how we dissociate acts of penitence, self-denial, and mortification from love. There is an easy soft religion ever knocking at our hearts, ever saying to us in the world, Why harass yourselves with these severer tasks? Why give up your pleasant food? Why sacrifice your innocent enjoyments? The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a law of liberty, it stands not in burdensome tasks. The

kingdom of God is not meat and drink, it is peace and love in the Holy Ghost.

But oh! my brethren, love is a plant that cannot flourish in the heart, unless the rank soil be chastened by mortification.

Look at the days that are past. Were any distinguished for the love of God who were not also distinguished for strictness towards themselves? What was the blessed Paul's life? let the epistle of last Sunday testify; and what else has been the life of Christ's saints and servants from that day even to this? Let us accept this then as a rule, that without self-denial there can be no growth in love.

And let us take this to ourselves as a simple rule for the coming season of Lent—to endeavour every day to please God more than to enjoy any earthly pleasure.

“Now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” Amen.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ASH-WEDNESDAY.

PLAIN REASONS FOR OBSERVING LENT.

JOEL ii. 13. *Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God ; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.*

ON this day, the first of the forty days of Lent, I would wish plainly to put before you, my brethren, the reasons why we Christians are taught to observe these days as days of humiliation and prayer and fasting.

This I am the more anxious to do, not only because it is my duty to teach you plainly and faithfully every thing that I believe God has ordained for the edification and the final salvation of your souls ; but because I also believe that many devout persons have imbibed a strong prejudice against this godly practice, and have been led by the foolish teaching of ignorant men to suppose that this custom of observing Lent is contrary to the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free ; and though it be enjoined upon all, as our Prayer-books testify, yet that it is a mere ordinance of man, a carnal commandment,

which hath no certain warrant from holy Scripture; and, therefore, as they do not believe that it is taught of God, they will not render any obedience to what they see would be very distasteful to their natural inclinations, very much interfering with their self-indulgent habits, and a hinderance perhaps to them in their pursuit of worldly gain. Perhaps, my brethren, some of you here present have been persuaded to disregard the observance of Lent on some such grounds as these—let me then ask your earnest attention, whilst I endeavour to set these three points simply and plainly before you.

1. Why we Christians are taught to observe the forty days of Lent?

2. What is the way in which we may all observe them?

3. What will be the benefit to our souls, of following the rule of the Church, and of observing Lent as the season in which we are especially taught to repent and humble ourselves before God?

And first, let me explain to you why we Christians are taught to observe the forty days of Lent more than any other period of the year, as a time of humiliation and prayer and fasting. In so doing, brethren, we are following, as closely

as we may, the footsteps of our blessed Lord. Christ, you know, is our example; He has taught us in His own holy life on earth how we ought to serve God. In the holy Gospels we read that our blessed Saviour at this very time retired from the world into the wilderness, and there, for the period of forty days and forty nights, humbled Himself before God with fasting and with prayer. Now, why did the blessed Jesus thus humble Himself with fasting? He was Himself holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He had done no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. It could not be for Himself that He fasted and prayed in the wilderness during these forty days. No, my brethren, it was not for Himself, it was for us, and for our sins: it was for you and for me, and for all who name the name of Jesus, that He there fasted and prayed.

When then the Church teaches you to observe these forty days of Lent as days of abstinence and prayer, and retirement from the world, she teaches you to do as Jesus did: she bids you to follow the footsteps of Him whom you confess to be in all things your example: she says to you, Jesus your Saviour at this season went away into the wilderness, and fasted and humbled Himself for

you: she says, moreover, that all the first followers of Jesus, the early Christians, the firstlings of that great flock whom no man can number, did as their Lord's example taught them—they retired as much as they could from the world, and humbled their souls with fasting. "Go," saith the Church to us, "and do likewise." Go from the world; at least, from its heedless pleasures, and humble yourself before God for your many sins: for strange indeed must it appear even to us, short-sighted as we are, that God should thus consecrate in Christ this season, and man, calling himself a Christian, despise it: strange, that when the spotless Son entered into temptation through fasting, we, sin-stained as we are, and impure from our mother's womb, should think that needless for us, whereby the ever-blessed Son, as man, was perfected: strange, that when all His saints and servants, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, righteous kings, types of that great Mediator, and the great Mediator Himself, observed this godly custom, persons in this day should think they may neglect or despise it, as a carnal and unprofitable service.

One reason, then, for our observing this sacred season as a time for humiliation and prayer, is, thereby to follow the footsteps of our blessed

Lord : and, so far from its not being taught of God, if we try in our daily lives to conform ourselves to the example of Christ, we shall do as He did ; we shall disregard the world's opinion, and the world's ways, and may be the world's scorn : and we shall humbly follow Christ ; fasting when He fasted, humbling ourselves when He humbled Himself, and praying to Almighty God to give to us that strength and grace which will enable us to overcome the temptations of sin, and finally to triumph in Christ.

But another reason there is why we should not neglect the observance of Lent, in that it is a time especially marked out for us to begin the great work of repentance. Now we all know, that when we have any work to do which is painful and irksome to us, how loth we are to begin ; how prone we are to put off ; how ready we are to catch at any excuse for not beginning it directly. And we all know, when the work is done, how salutary was the master's voice which would not allow of any delay, but called us to begin the work at once. We perhaps murmured at what then sounded harsh in our ears. The long hours of hard toil were before us, and we were unwilling to begin : but now that the work is done, and done betimes, we can see the wis-

dom, and ourselves acknowledge the goodness of the master who would not permit us to stand idle. Just so, brethren, it is with the work of repentance : it is painful, it is humiliating, it is very distasteful to our natural pride and self-importance, to kneel down, and not only confess before God that we are miserable sinners, but to confess each and every sin that hath stained our character in His sight—the sin of lying perhaps, or the sin of swearing, or the sin of fornication, or the sin of covetousness, or the sin of false dealing and cheating one another—and not only to confess these several sins, but to do so steadfastly purposing and promising before God that we will, by the help of His grace, go back to these sins no more.

Now this (which is that repentance towards God, without which, as our Saviour saith, we shall assuredly perish) not only humbles a man to the very dust, by making him see what a very great sinner he himself is in the sight of God, but may also cost him much at the moment, and take from him much gain, much profit, much sinful indulgence ; for man's worldly condition is much and quickly advanced by evil practices and unlawful ways. Therefore, to really repent of these and to renounce them may cost him much ; so

much, that though he knows he must repent, and that without a true and sincere repentance he will assuredly perish, yet he is unwilling to begin now; he cannot bring himself to enter upon this strict life yet; to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow is the excuse with which the call to repentance is met. Now, whilst we are thus hesitating, doubting, and balancing in our minds between gain and godliness, how good, how salutary is the voice of the Church, which speaks to us at this season, and bids us begin at once. This very Lent, she says to us, Come and humble yourselves before God for your many sins, and ask His grace to enable you to do better for the time to come. To make a beginning is, you know, to do half the work. Make that beginning now, the Church says, now: it may cost you much; it probably will interfere with your pleasures, or your profit, or your worldly gains; it may subject you to observation, and ridicule, and scorn, to be seen coming on a week-day to church; it may provoke a jest or a sneer at what the world will say is great falseness and hypocrisy. Be it so: but what may the neglect of this cost you? The perdition of your own souls.

Consider also, brethren, if there be not those among you who have felt the need of repentance,

and have made some beginnings, but only some very imperfect beginnings towards it. There have been hindrances in the way, as there always will be. Satan will take good care of that. Perhaps you have been troubled with the cares of the world, toiled with a large family, entangled by narrow means, or surrounded with bitter tongues and quarrelsome neighbours, and your good purposes have come to nothing, your better desires and prayers have not been effectual, and have brought forth no worthy fruits of repentance.

Well, then, the Church comes now and says to you, says in her frequent calls to prayer, says in the sermons and exhortations of her ministers, Take up again your good purposes, and strive once more to bring them to effect. Be not disheartened at past failings, but rise and try again; you serve a master who is long-suffering and of great pity, who willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And you have the prayers of many good men with you at this time to help you in the great work of the salvation of your soul. The best of us all need a renewed repentance. Beware how you delay any longer. God calls you now, this Lent, you do not know that another Lent may be given to you.

The reasons then why we Christians ought to observe this coming season of Lent as a season of humiliation, and prayer, and fasting, is the example of Christ, and the consciousness of many among us that they have never yet truly repented ; and though the hair is growing gray upon their heads, that they have not yet forsaken the sins and even the follies of their youth.

Having shewn you, my brethren, the reasons why the Church teaches us to do what our forefathers did in days of old, let me point out to you one or two ways in which you, every one of you, may so observe this godly practice as to be savingly benefited by it.

Let each man prove himself before God ; let each person here present seriously consider what is his besetting sin ; I mean, what is the sin which he is most strongly tempted to commit. In some it is the sin of swearing ; in others it is the sin of lying ; in others it is the sin of dishonesty and pilfering ; in some it is the endeavour to over-reach and defraud a neighbour ; in some it is the sin of indolence ; in others it is the habit of giving up everything for the sake of gain. Now, whatever your besetting sin is, resolve to keep from it this Lent ; and then, having made the resolution, come up to this holy house and

entreat God's forgiveness for what is past; and God's grace to enable you to resist your sin for the time to come.

I have endeavoured to so arrange the services in this church, that all, however poor they are, however occupied, may come a certain number of times every week to seek God's blessing in His holy house. I know that many who have to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, cannot come till after dark. I know there are others who, from the many necessary claims upon their time at home, cannot come to the daily morning prayer. But I have fixed the hours, in the hope that they all may be able to come up here and seek the Lord their God, some days, at least.

Thus, I believe all who are really in earnest may carry out this simple rule: 1, stedfastly resolving to break from their besetting sin, and not to give way to it this Lent; 2, to come up to this holy house on week days, to ask God's forgiveness for what is past, and God's blessing upon what is to come; and 3, to practise some self-denial, in foregoing such pleasures as they might lawfully enjoy.

Having given you a rule, by which this season of Lent may be observed, let me further shew you the benefit to our own souls, which I truly

believe the observance of this simple rule may effect.

It will be a sort of test to you of how far the religion you profess has any real influence upon your life and conversation. For if a man finds that he is unwilling even for the forty days of Lent to forego his wicked practices, his evil habits, his unlawful gains, what a mockery it is for him to profess the religion of Christ, and to talk about taking up his cross, and following the footsteps of our blessed Lord ; and yet there are many who have not done as much as this yet. One benefit then of this way of observing Lent will be, that it will be a test to prove your own selves by, and see what influence the religion we here profess has upon our daily life.

But another benefit will be, the beginning at once that great and necessary work of repentance which many have never yet begun, but without which, our Lord saith, we shall perish. Now, I don't mean to teach you that repentance and humiliation before God are to be confined to the season of Lent ; they are, as we know, to be the marks of our character through every day of our lives ; but I do tell you, that you can hardly calculate the advantage to your own soul of now making a beginning. Once break through a habit,

and the victory is more than half won. Once be persuaded to give up that wicked habit of swearing or lying, or cheating, or self-indulgence ; once be persuaded to come up and confess before God your sin, and to ask His forgiveness, not once, but many times ; and not only will you be afraid to go back to the evil you have done, but you will bless God for having called you from it. A heavy door turns upon a little hinge, and your whole life may be turned by the observance of this simple rule during the forty days of Lent. Only act upon it in faith ; give yourselves heartily to it ; bear in mind that the salvation or the perdition of your own immortal soul is at stake ; if you neglect the means of grace, and go on in your own careless, sinful, and ungodly ways, the sentence is already written, "the soul that sinneth it shall die."

But if you will repent in earnest, and amend your evil ways, and turn unto the Lord your God, in sorrow and self-abasement, He will snatch you as a very brand from the burning ; He will save your soul alive. Oh ! heed then the apostle's words ; no longer despise the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, but remember it is the goodness of God which now leadeth thee to repentance.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SORROW FOR SIN.

LENT.

PSALM CXXVI. 6, 7. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed: shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.*

FROM old time this has been the appointed season for self-examination, for mourning for sin, for chastisement of our body's lusts and passions, and for repentance. The time cannot be remembered in the Christian Church when there did not come Lent at the beginning of each year, with its austere and sober influence ready to quiet and to tame the heart that was eager after this world's pleasures. If it be useful to have some certain periods of sedateness and of calm,—if it be wise to have a fixed time for setting about a task, which we are at all times too ready to put off to a more convenient season, the task of finding out how our souls stand in the sight of Almighty God, and in the sight of

our own consciences,—if it be a good thing ever to reason with ourselves of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, then we must confess that the Church has done what is useful, wise, and good, in marking out for us these forty days of Lent. But if the best thing for us is the world's unceasing noise and bustle, if the thoughts we should most avoid are those of the account we must give at the bar of eternal judgment; if the recollection of our sins and of the burdened state of our consciences be that which we should hardest strive to shun,—and many Christian men and women live and act as if this was the real case,—then is Lent, although long proved in practice, and apostolic in its origin, a vain and antiquated custom; and the sooner it is disused the better.

I said that many Christians lived and acted in this most unwise manner, seeming to go through their lives as if there was no God in the world, but I know that they do not really think or believe that it is so. No! the most careless, the most self-indulgent do, if you knew their thoughts, look forward to a time when they shall begin to repent, begin that awful, that most awful preparation, the preparation to meet their God. There are few or none but what have

settled for themselves, that some day they will be very different to what they are now, more strict in their conduct, more regular in their prayers, more God-fearing in their thoughts. Nay, they have often even planned out to themselves the whole manner of how they will live, and what they will do when they have repented and become serious; for they would be frightened, and shocked above all things, to think that they should die in their present frame of mind. Yet with these people time goes on, and they stand still: year follows year, and death and judgment most certainly and infallibly draw nearer, but their change of life and repentance is not nearer. It seems no nearer, but in real and very truth it is further off than ever: and so while always intending well, they find themselves rapidly carried down that broad and much-trod road, whose ending is at the very gates of hell.

How useful, then, is it to have for these persons something which may stop them and make them pause, in the course of time itself! To make the very year, as it begins, cry aloud to them: "*Repent now: behold now is the accepted time; not at Pentecost or at Trinity, but now, and here, 'turn you to the Lord, with*

weeping, fasting and praying.”” The very aspect of the natural year seems to bid them to break up the fallow ground of their hardened hearts, and cast therein, while there is yet time for them to take root and spring up and grow, the seed of grace, the seed of humiliation, self-chastisement and godly sorrow: and the spiritual year no less puts them solemnly in mind, that he “who *now* goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.”

Sorrow is the necessary attendant on sin. They are inseparable. There is not, and there cannot be, any such thing as rejoicing and triumphant sin: for sin is associated with unhappiness in its very nature; and greater and smaller sins with greater or lesser shares of misery and unhappiness. Sin is its own punishment: the being in a state of sin involves the being in a state of misery; so that it has been said, that even if the Almighty had appointed no punishment for the wicked, if even there were no judgment at all, and no hell at all, yet for the sinner to feel that he was a sinner, and to remain a sinner to all eternity, would be a sufficient, and in itself most fearful hell. There is no happiness, no enjoyment even, for the

sinner. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest : whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked."

Now in the case of great sinners, such as murderers, adulterers, blasphemers, this is plain enough ; no one thinks of denying it ; all people acknowledge it ; *they* can have no pleasure, no peace, no rest ; "Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes." Sorrow and misery are in their case clearly enough attendant on sin and guilt. But then, we say to ourselves, I am not a murderer, an adulterer, a blasphemer ; so that this is not very greatly a concern of mine. Now granting that we are not guilty of those deadly and crying sins, and feeling that we are not tormented by that haunting misery, that ceaseless disquietude and unrest which must ever follow on such fearful breakings of God's eternal law, yet we too *are* sinners. And we are ready enough in a way to confess it without going into particulars, but talking only of a general corruption, which sits all the while very light upon our consciences. We too, I say, are sinners in a greater or less degree, I mean,

are guilty of positive sins and breakings of God's law. Either we are not careful to speak the exact truth in every thing, but say what is false from time to time, from some motive or other, or we are spiteful and backbiting, bearing silly malice and indulging in small hatreds, or we accustom ourselves to be careless and indifferent about holy things, or we take pleasure in impure and wrong thoughts, or we envy others, and long after small worldly advantages: these sins, people will say, are but little sins; but though they may seem to bring with them but little sorrows, yet they *do* bring sorrows. We are guilty of them often and often; and we do not feel after them like Judas did when he betrayed his Lord, it is not likely that we should; but we feel the effects of them nevertheless. We feel them in a repining and restlessness of heart, in a sensation of dulness and low-spiritedness, in a longing for amusement and excitement which cannot be easily satisfied, but is always increasing, in a weariness and coldness of prayer, and in a general peevishness and discontentment of mind. These may seem small sorrows, yet they are dangerous as being the fruit of sins. And as we know that a close thick small rain will wet the person who is exposed to it as thoroughly as

a violent storm, so these fretful irritatings are really fatal in many more cases than the poignant anguish which follows upon an open and deadly breach of one of God's commandments. I mean that a man may be a hardened sinner in small matters as well as in great ones ; and as these small sins, though repeated ever so often, do not call down the blame of the world, and are not startling to a man or woman's own conscience, so without narrow observation, and prayer and study of God's Word, they are not likely to have their existence even suspected. There are thousands and tens of thousands of fair-going respectable Christians, both in the world's eyes and their own, whose spiritual condition is most full of peril, whom death would find comfortless and Saviourless, because their whole life, without, perhaps, any one open wickedness, has been a continued succession of small sins, and of petty unhappinesses.

I said that sorrow must of course follow sin. But there are different kinds of sorrow : there is the sorrow I have been speaking of, which worketh death ; and there is also a godly sorrow, which purges away evil, and heals the sores that sin has made, the sorrow of repentance. Some sorrow *must* follow sin ; but we, my baptized

brothers, may choose which it shall be,—that natural pain which is its proper punishment and reward, or that grief which comes by grace, and which draws us straight to Him who is at once our atonement and our comforter. The one is always increasing and self-multiplying; sin begetting sorrow, and sorrow sin, until they result in that eternal woe which is the second death. The other is ever striving against sin, hating, abhorring, destroying it. As the Apostle says, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” And he goes on, “For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!” This sorrow is repentance,—repentance! without which we shall all perish when the last great trial comes.

It is then *now*, if we have not done it before, that we should set ourselves to examine our consciences; and that, not by comparing ourselves with our neighbours, not by fixing any standard of our own, but by “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” His example

we are to follow in our well-doing : to Him we are to look when we fall short. I know well, that though we may by grace avoid this or that particular sin, it is impossible to escape sin. But what we cannot avoid we must repent of ; and what we repent of He will forgive. He who is the pattern is also the atonement ; He who is the way and the truth, is also the life. As long as we do not repent we are away from Him, but by repentance we can come to Him, and he that cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out. " If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us : if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The more thorough and severe we are in our self-examination, the more we search out our often-repeated and unnoticed sins, the more we sorrow for all that we have left undone, the more shall we love our Saviour, the more shall we grieve for having so long forgotten and despised Him, the more shall we be eager and earnest-hearted to draw nearer and ever nearer to Him and to His Cross. This is the seed that we should sow, the seed of good resolutions and fervent prayers : and thus should we sow it, with diligent and careful self-examination,

while we water it with the tears of contrition and repentance. Let us no longer stand still, but go forth, even weeping for the time we have so sadly lost, to the work to which He calls us : and then in His good time we shall reap. His seed will not lie dead, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and it will bring forth fruit to His glory. Repentance will bring forth pardon, and examination will spring forth into good works, and prayer shall yield hope, and tears shall become joy. Yes, joy ! for even in this world and to us sinners religion is not all mourning or all sorrowful ; there is comfort, which even here is a foretaste of that comfort with which they that mourn shall be blessed for evermore. For the penitent there is yet “joy in believing :”—and in our sorrow we are not alone. For He, too, sowed in tears. Our temptations and trials have not been ours only ; nor we the first to stagger under them ; for He too went forth weeping when He bore the good seed of man’s salvation. Strong crying and tears and the depth of unfathomable grief, a sorrow exceeding, and even unto death, were His in the days of His flesh, and that for our sins, not for His own. For us did He fast forty days, for us was He tempted of the devil, for us men and for

our salvation. If our Master and only Saviour thus sowed in tears for us, what must be our deadness of spirit if we weep not for ourselves, whose sins nailed Him to the accursed tree. It was as *now* that He fasted, as *now* that He first went forth : *now* then let us begin to follow Him ; far off and feebly, and oftentimes falling short, yet still imploring grace to follow Him yet again. He sowed in tears ; He went forth weeping ; yet, *doubtless*, He “ shall come again with joy, and bring His sheaves with Him.” We believe that He shall come to judge the quick and dead : we are told that “ them which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him,” when He comes.

So let us recollect our sins, so let us chastise ourselves and repent, “ as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing ;” rejoicing that our sorrow makes us fitter to draw nigh to Him who in all things suffered like as we do, and was in all points tempted like as we are, only without sin.

He went on His way, the ordained Sacrifice for all ; He went on His way, the rejected of men, mocked, and scourged, and thorn-crowned ; He went on His way bearing the cross of pain ; “ Look and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.” He shall come again when the

world's harvest-time is full; He shall come again when the number of His elect is accomplished; He shall come again in the clouds of heaven, "sitting in glory on the right hand of the power of God." Who in that day shall be able to rejoice? Who shall dare, amid the awfulness and fearfulness of judgment, amid the ruin of earth and the passing away of heaven, to lift up their heads with joy, but those who have sorrowed and wept with Him, who have repented of what they have done amiss, who are blessed with the blessing by which unrighteousness is forgiven and sin is covered? Such alone when He comes again shall He bring with Him, gathering them out of the world like wheat-sheaves into His immortal garner, in that day when He shall wipe all tears from off all faces, and bid the redeemed enter into the joy of their Lord.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

OUR LORD'S TEMPTATION A CALL TO GODLY SORROW.

HEB. iv. 15. *But we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

THE order of the seasons of the Christian year has changed. The earlier seasons were times of joy and festive commemoration. Christmas, with its glad tidings of the Saviour's birth; the festival of the Circumcision, accompanied with the cheerful hopes and happy omens of a new year of blessing; the Epiphany, when we beheld the kings of the east kneeling down and offering gifts in humblest adoration before the mysterious Child;—this succession of festivals now ceases. We are still following Christ, but it is under a changed aspect. We are putting on a very different garb, and speaking in very different language, from that with which we have hitherto appeared before God. Pursuing the same path on which we entered at the beginning of the year, following the same Lord, yet as He now appears before us under

a different form, so we are changed to different thoughts.

Even the great festivals which have gone before were not wholly seasons of joy. For how could even Christmas be to us unmixed with sorrow, when it tells us of the Son of God entering, for our sake, into the miseries of this sinful world? or how can the festival of the Circumcision be occupied only with the warm affectionate greetings of the new year, when the day is so deeply marked with the first shedding of our Saviour's blood? And even the Epiphany, on which was manifested something of the majesty of His Godhead in the flesh, as before the holy Child the wise men knelt adoring, even that bright day was accompanied with the thought that Herod was seeking the young Child's life, and He was about to flee as an outcast into a strange land. In commemorating His sacred birth, and the mysterious events of His early childhood, He is even then known as the Man of Sorrows; our hopes and joys are mingled with the thoughts of His unspeakable humiliation and sufferings in the flesh. But now humiliation and suffering is the one main thought that absorbs us as we look upon our blessed Lord. We behold Him in the wilderness, cast out of the sight of men, in lone-

liness, and amid desolation, in communion with the tempter, the enemy of God and man.

There is a wonderful harmony in the successive holy seasons of the Christian year. Some, the earlier ones, as the festivals of the Nativity and the Epiphany, breathe joy in the thought of Christ's presence with us on earth, and work on our minds the impressions of thankfulness and rejoicing. Others, that follow later in the year, as Easter, and the Ascension Day, and Whitsuntide, elevate us in the thought of our life in heaven, and of our Saviour's exalted glory in the presence of the Father, and thus draw our hearts to communion with "those things that are above." To temper these more excited feelings, to sober our spirits, to teach us humility and lowliness of heart, to inspire godly sorrow and repentance unto life, comes this long season of Lent, and the still deeper mournings of Passion week. Each season, as it passes, has its own blessed work to fulfil. Each comes as a messenger from heaven. Each bears with it its own special graces for the faithful, and imprints its own image on the heart. Working together in order, they tend to form the Christian character to the "edifying of the body of Christ." And now this season of Lent, into which we have just entered, is, by the grace of

God, to accomplish in us its own work, to leave on us its own impression, to breathe over our solemn assemblies and our secret chambers the spirit of supplication and prayer, of penitence and self-denial, as a precious testimony of God's presence and our unfailing hopes of mercy in Him Who suffered for us.

The appointment of the season of Lent has two special objects in view. It commemorates our Lord's forty days' fast, and His mysterious meeting with, and conquest over, Satan. The spiritual benefit to ourselves, is the deeper view, and more contrite sense, of the sins which cost Him such a sacrifice, and required such love to overcome. These two objects naturally direct our thoughts, and suggest the main topics of meditation on such a day as this.

Place then before your mind the Son of the Most High God, clothed in human flesh, subject to human infirmities, unattended, unsheltered, without food, and, though miraculously sustained, yet experiencing the weakness and sinking of soul and body, which attend a protracted fast; for of Him we may believe, the Psalmist prophetically spoke, "My knees are weak through fasting; My flesh is dried up for want of fatness." Behold the powers of evil gathering around Him,

and the very chief of the fallen angels permitted to employ his malice, as on Job of old, so now on One greater, though for the time subjected to more than his sorrows, and encompassed with the same infirmities. Conceive then the infinitely varied suggestions of sin, thoughts of pollution, "fiery darts" of wickedness entering into the soul of the Son of Man ; though having no power over Him, though stirring no responsive feeling within Him, and passing harmlessly ; yet inspiring all their horror and their shame, even though powerless to wound. We know, even such as we are, so long inured to sin, so conscious of its miserable pleasure, how we have shrunk away from some hateful thought, loathing the lust which yet all but ensnared us ; how the very presence of the temptation which we abhorred, occasioned the deepest anguish. Something then of the nature of the trial which He bore in His undefiled holiness, we may imagine, when all the temptations that Satan could suggest were present to His soul, perceived and felt, though not yielded to. All that our Lord bore in its incomprehensible burden of guilt on Calvary, *that* He endured in the wilderness in the hatefulness of its thought and the power of its seduction. "He was in all points tempted like as we are,

yet without sin ;” not admitting into Himself any impression of evil ; yet subject to the passing to and fro through His human nature of all our sin, touched though not tainted by it, feeling it, though not influenced by it. “ For He was not a High-Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” The same mysterious necessity which required that He should taste death for every man, called upon Him also to taste the sin which caused it ; as death for every man, so every man’s sin ; “ in all points tempted like as we are,” yea, like as each one of us is tempted. “ He became sin” for us ; and this in all but the defilement and the act. That was impossible ; for as His body could know no corruption even in the tomb, so neither soul nor body could know any stain of sin ; yet “ He became sin,” in all that was possible, in its terrible penalties consummated on the cross, and in its hateful consciousness in the temptations of the wilderness.

From hence it is that His sympathy with humanity in all its forms and all its trials, is derived. As God, He had all pity and all love for His fallen creatures, but could have no sympathy ; for sympathy implies a common consciousness, an actual partaking of another’s sorrows by the

experience of them in one's-self. Sympathy is fellow feeling, and though God knows all the secrets of men's hearts, He could not feel what those hearts suffer. The Son of God must become the Son of Man before He could know by actual experience the power of temptation, and the miseries of human infirmity. It was part of the mystery of the Incarnation that in taking the flesh, He should bear all that burdened it, all that overwhelmed it in its fall, all but a participation in its sin. For how else could He be "afflicted in our afflictions?" how be our brother, if He feel not the greatest of our sorrows? how have "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," except that He Himself also be "compassed with infirmities?" He enters into our nature to save it; passes through death to conquer it. So must He likewise taste the very power of evil to help us to overcome it. "For in that He suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

2. It is peculiarly fit, that at such a season we should in a special manner remember to confess the sin which has cost our Lord all this bitterness. While He is thus suffering from the hateful presence of the tempter, it is most fit that

we should try more and more to realize his power over us, and our actual yieldings to his temptations. There are two forms under which our sin presents itself to our minds.

There is first the sinfulness of our very nature, the sinful propensities which pervade us, and are always present with us, even though we yield not to them. It is true that the guilt of our original sin is done away in holy baptism; its power broken; but itself remains. The perpetual tendency, the constant inclining, the lust of the flesh, is in us always, even to the end; though by the grace of God it be subdued. This is part of our sorrowful confession before God; that we are in our very nature, and in all things, of ourselves inclined to sin. Our being is corrupt. Whatever we offer unto God of good is His own; but we that offer it are unclean and evil. We forget this from being so accustomed to it: as persons born in an unhealthy atmosphere, though diseased and deformed, are yet unconscious of it, because they know no better state; so we, born in sin, are unconscious of our fall, because we have never known a pure state of being, never breathed the air of heaven. We forget, or rather cannot feel, amidst what corruption in ourselves we live and move and have our being, because

we have no experience of a sinless life. We forget that even while we are partakers of new nature, a divine nature, as Christ's members, our old nature still remains, not wholly to be put off, till mortality is swallowed up of life; and that we are still thus unclean, should be a perpetual subject of mourning before God. It matters little in comparison, how we became so, or on whom the blame lies; that we *are* such, is our misery. Let a man only view himself as a being gifted with an everlasting life, but throughout tainted with evil, and of his own nature inclined to sin, and all speculations as to the causes of such a state will appear vain indeed, be lost in the thought of the terrible end to which such a being must look unless God in mercy altogether change his very nature. Therefore in the devout confessions and acts of penitence to which the season of Lent will lead, we should mourn before God for that all-pervading corruption of our being.

Secondly, we have to recall to mind our actual transgressions, the thoughts indulged, the words uttered, the deeds done. If the corruption of which we spoke be the fountain-head of our sin, these are the streams which issue forth from it. And here it should be noted well that our sins past still live to the eye of God. They seem to

us to be gone by, they fade away in the distance; we forget them, or think lightly of them, because the remembrance of them is no longer distinct. We think that the mere passing away of time has worn away the sin, and that God will look on them as we look on them; but it is not so. To His eye the past is always present. He knows neither past nor future—all is present to Him. All is seen by that sleepless eye, clear and unchanging. There is no difference to His sight, whether thousands of years are past, or the deed were done yesterday. The blood of righteous Abel still cries unto Him from the ground. The apostacy of Judas is as visibly present before Him, as when he went out of the upper chamber that dreadful night. Years have passed: but these deeds remain as they were before God. So the sins of our childhood and the madness of our youth are before God as the last act of our frailty which grieved us to-day, though apparently veiled from our eyes by the distance. The snow falls on the ground, flake upon flake, covering all beneath, and veiling under its smooth surface the footprints upon the soil. So time passing conceals beneath its shadowy veil the acts of years gone by, and the words, and the evil heart's cherished passions. But as surely as the prints

upon the soil still live beneath the snow, to be revealed as truly and as clearly as ever, when the snow melts; so those acts and words and passions live unchanged, unchangeable, unless brought to the "Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." They live recorded in the book of God, and when that book is opened at the day of judgment, they will re-appear, even to the sinner's eye, as fresh as when newly done, unless blotted out in the blood of the Lamb. Time makes no difference, our sins are still the same, and we have been and are the transgressors. Therefore in the confessions of Lent, the review of a past life is a needful exercise for the penitent. Even sins confessed before, and in the mercies of the atonement absolved, should be remembered still, to renew our shame, to deepen humility, to glorify God's love, to re-awaken our horror and fear of sinning more. But if unconfessed and unab-solved, then most needful is such a review of our former sins, if we would live to God. Sin suffered to remain upon the conscience, unforgiven, is like the blight upon the branch, hindering all growth, eating into the core, bringing on a premature death. Some sin long ago done, still burdening the conscience, may thus blight the entire life and quench the very Spirit of God.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” It is a fearful error to suppose that because we are changed from what we once were, the past is for that reason as though it had not been, and that the sin gone by has no longer any terror for us. It still cries out against us, unless it be pardoned. The mere ceasing to sin is no penitence, nor is the distance of time any absolution from its guilt.

We must then accompany our blessed Master into the wilderness, with love to Him for His sufferings for our sake, and with anxiety and grief for ourselves, because we have fallen so low beneath the power of the tempter. Such confessions bring us nearer to Him Who at this season bore our woe. The prayer of repentance and the cry of the contrite, bring Him near to us, and us to Him. “He dwelleth in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the hearts of the contrite ones.” May He direct our penitential exercises and prayers to His own glory.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

OUR SPIRITUAL WARFARE.

EPHES. vi. 12. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

THE Son of God passed through His Temptation: because temptation is a state common to humanity. He redeemed man by passing through all to which man in his fall had subjected himself, and, as He passed through, conquering. He was the first and only one of Adam's race who could meet, and overcome, the Tempter. His "heel" was bruised,—His human, or lower nature suffered,—in the conflict; but even as He suffered, He "bruised the head" of His enemy. He overcame for us; and by overcoming in His own person, enabled us His members to overcome likewise. "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of

eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." He stood victorious on the other side of the wilderness of temptations, having earned for us an everlasting security against the evil One. His victory was complete; so complete that we do not read of Satan ever again approaching our Lord, at least not in order to renew his temptations. St. Luke says, that "he," Satan, "departed from Him for a season," but if these words mean that he was to return, we have no reason to suppose that such return was with the view of again making a similar attempt. Foiled for the first time on earth, and awed by the mysterious Stranger, though unable to see in the suffering flesh "God manifest," he seems to have felt his powers exhausted, and his devices vain. His designs were afterwards directed to compassing the death of Him Whom he could not defile. He was busy during the latter days of our Lord's ministry with the chief rulers, and with the people, and with the false apostle. It is probable that in the Agony of Gethsemane Satan was near, and his influence exerted, to cast a terrible shadow over the Soul Which he had power to bruise with sorrow, but Whose unapproachable holiness even he was compelled to confess. But to tempt Him he came no

more. And One in our fallen nature had overcome for ever all the powers of darkness.

No man was near to behold the Lord in His Temptation. Its circumstances and details would have passed unheeded, but that the Holy Ghost revealed them to the Evangelist, by whom they were written, as all the other Scriptures, for our instruction. In our Lord's Temptation we see the reality of our own: its very nature and extent, the mode and measure of its approach, are therein signified. It is a lesson therefore to be studied, not merely the better to appreciate our Lord's sufferings, and His incomprehensible love towards us; but also the better to understand our own state of danger, the powers and the assaults of the spiritual enemies by whom we are encompassed.

And, first, as to the reality of the tempter's presence and personal influence upon us, which we are so prone to forget. We look at all the evil things around us; the manifold snares; the seductive pleasures; the openings for every indulgence; the opportunities for gratifying all lust: the pomps and vanities; the vast complicated machinery of evil existing in the world, and we forget that there is within all a spirit of wickedness at work; one who is perpetually

adapting every part to the ruin of the souls of men. They are but the outward, visible forms of temptation, and through them, the father of lies, "that old serpent, called the devil, which deceiveth the whole world," acts upon us. They are his implements. Beneath the fair veil of this world's inventions, he invisibly tests and searches the hearts of men. Suiting his device to the infirmities, the tastes, the special tendencies of every man, he plays, as it were, the wires of the vast machine, and so, himself unperceived, surrounds and pervades the whole human race, penetrating every heart, and luring each to his ruin. Implacably hostile to every good work of God, and to the happiness of God's creatures, because in them the glory of God is manifested, he rests not, neither does he relax the intensity of that malice with which he first assailed our first parents. The same determination to destroy was, according to the voice of prophecy, aimed at every individual offspring of her whom he first persuaded to transgress; "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed."

Nor is it merely through the manifest incentives to evil, the more palpable occasions of sin, that the destroyer works. Even in the gar-

den of Eden he could use the fruit which God had pronounced "very good," as the means of temptation, and in the Temptation of the wilderness the very pinnacle of the temple was perverted into an occasion of sinful thoughts. How then may we expect, that the very purest and best of earthly relations and objects of interest, may be invested by his subtlety with all kinds of seductions, fatal to the soul's peace. Even the sacred relations of father, mother, wife, or child, may be turned into temptations to evil; and, when so brought in opposition to the will of God, are even to be hated, lest we die. There is nothing, however good, even what God has blessed, but it may become a snare or a stumblingblock, through which he for whom Christ died shall perish.

Nor is it merely through the outward scene of this worldly life, that he can reach and influence the souls of men; he has a nearer and more direct access to our hearts. He has means of influence upon our very thoughts and imaginations. In some mysterious way his thoughts can mingle with our own; he can infuse suggestions of evil, and sudden ideas of sin, or sceptical doubts, or the horrors of despair, which we can trace to no outward source, nor connect with any visible

object, or any past knowledge of our own. They are the inspirations of iniquity, and flow from the immediate communion which Satan is able to hold with our hearts. These are intended by what holy Scripture calls "the fiery darts of the wicked," which faith in God shall quench.

What we look upon generally as mere chance, or misfortune, or wild sports of fancy, may in reality be machinations or suggestions of that awful being; still awful in his super-human powers, though of horrible malignity; who ever "goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." We cannot perceive, because our eyes are holden. We live and move within the veil of the flesh. Satan and his host, like the blessed angels, are spirits, and work as spirits. Like the working of the Spirit of the Most High God, so their workings are known only in the effects. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed; and lust, when it has conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;" but how the lust was stirred; how the object excited the desire; who fanned the fatal flame within; whence came the crafty design for indulging it; how the occasion opened itself; how the conscience was darkened, and the keen sense blinded, as the sin

was finished:—all these are questions in the history of human transgression anxiously to be solved; but of them what part is to be ascribed to our own carnal will and frailness, what to the fraud and malice of the devil, who can truly say?

Our Lord's Temptation was written for our instruction; not merely does it give one striking instance of Satan's dealing with man: rather it is a type and shadow of his mode of attack in all cases; we read in it certain great laws which regulate his dealings with all men. The veil is for the moment withdrawn, and we gain an insight into the spiritual world. We are enabled to realize, we indeed actually see the movements, we hear the voice, we penetrate the design and method, of the great tempter of mankind. If we contrast our Lord's Temptation with the only other instance of a similar kind recorded, that of our first parent, we see the same principles of action described in both. In neither case could Satan infuse into the soul any principles of evil, nor change its nature in any degree. He cannot alter our faculties, nor touch our inward being. He cannot at his will direct our thoughts, nor transform their nature. Such power belongs to the Creator alone. Satan can present to the

mind the seductive object, or the occasion of sin : he can suggest within the mind itself thoughts and imaginations of evil. Beyond this he has no power, but such as we ourselves give to him by our own act. He suggested to our Lord what He might do to appease hunger ; he held before His mind the lying promises of this world's kingdoms, and the grandeur of a descent from the pinnacle of the temple : even as to Eve he presented the beauty of the forbidden fruit, and suggested doubts of the truth and meaning of the words of God. Here, however, his power ended ; he could not command the inward assent ; he could not constrain the will ; he could not change the purpose of the soul ; he could work upon it and around it, to excite, to disturb, to seduce, to darken it : but he could not enter into it, nor possess it, nor turn it to the fulfilment of evil, except by man's own permission. None but the Creator Himself can open the door of the human heart of His own mere will, and there rule its very central life, and direct all its powers after His own pleasure. Satan can but stand without, and seduce us to betray ourselves. It is only by our own yieldings that he can lead us "captive at his will." We must surrender our own strength, and subject our own wills to the

power of his seductions, or he can gain no advantage over us. Every temptation passes harmlessly over the soul's life, until we willingly admit it within us by our own consent. All the rulers of the darkness of this world are restrained within these bounds, and beyond them they cannot pass, unless man himself yield up the citadel of his heart, and so become the traitor, the betrayer of himself.

Like all other power, however, the power of Satan grows by use. The giving way to his suggestions increases the facility to further yieldings. One consent to Satan's snares tends to produce a continued helplessness under the recurrence of similar temptations. The tempted man sinks more and more easily, as he multiplies transgression. Gradually the mere presence of an opportunity of sin becomes to him irresistible: he at once falls; sin becomes his very nature. It was not always so. He was at one time slow to yield, or there was a struggle, or the sense of shame sprang up after the deed was done, and there was a resolution to sin no more. But by use this hesitation, this resistance of the inner life ceases. The whole soul consents at the mere suggestion of evil, and there is no remorse. Man has yielded up himself, and he is led captive at

another's will ; he is a slave ; he sins even as he is bid ; he is used as an "instrument of unrighteousness, to work uncleanness with greediness." The evil One has entered into him, and possesses him as his own, to be used for his own purposes. The man is no longer tempted ; he sins by a miserable necessity ; it is scarcely himself that acts ; he is become the organ of another who is become his master, who acts in him and through him ; he himself becomes a devil ; he is in a horrid manner identified with the enemy of God who now rules him ; he is one with him. Satan dwells in him, and he in him. Holy Scripture again lifts up the veil and reveals this consummation of human misery, in the person of one whom Satan won from the very side of his adorable Master ; successful against one of His nearest followers, after all his efforts had failed against the Lord Himself. The last state of Judas Iscariot is a revelation of the final possession of a soul, which yielding itself more and more to the power of the tempter, becomes at last the helpless instrument and unresisting slave of his will. "Satan entered into him," and from that hour there was no check to the utmost extent of wickedness, nor any place for repentance. And how does this differ from a multitude of

cases ever before us? and may not many an habitual sinner have become in like manner the willing slave of the ruler of the darkness of this world, who by degrees has seduced all his faculties to work iniquity, and now leads him captive at his will?

Whilst we thus learn the nature of our danger, so in our Lord's temptation we learn the powers of resistance wherewith we are endued. Our resistance depends on the instant effort of the steadfast will to repel the first suggestion of evil. Here lay the difference between the fall of our first parent, and the rising again of restored humanity in our blessed Lord. In Eve, human nature listened to the voice of the tempter, looked at the forbidden fruit, reasoned with the author of evil, and, faltering by degrees, sank beneath the snare. In our Lord, on the contrary, is displayed the intense abhorrence of an undefiled will, the instant indignation of the pure spirit, which repels with an offended majesty the intolerable offence of the very thought of sin. There was no pause, no listening, not even the momentary endurance of the imagination of evil. He cast it from His soul, as we might cast from off our hand some hateful reptile that clung to it. "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for

thou art an offence to Me," was the outward expression of the inward abhorrence of evil, which like "a consuming fire" could know no corruption.

Here then we see the only frame of mind in which we can be safe against the wiles of the devil. It is by cherishing the strong and steadfast will, the fixed, undivided purpose of serving God with an undefiled heart. This inward life cometh of God, and by God alone can be sustained: but it is within us that the power is bestowed. It is through ourselves that God will thus enable us to overcome, even as He overcame.

We must cherish this inward power by the frequency of prayer, by the use of sacraments, by the exercise of faith in God, by the study of the holy Scriptures, by meditation, by searching self-examination, by waiting upon God to know and do His will. His strength will then enter into us, and be perfected in our weakness. We shall then become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." It is the unalterable promise of God, that we shall be "able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand;" yea, "stand against all the wiles of the devil;" that we can "resist" him and that "he shall flee from" us.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

EARTHLY WANTS A SNARE.

ST. LUKE iv. 4. *And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*

DURING forty days and nights our Lord was miraculously sustained, and therefore did not suffer hunger. Thus far the laws of nature were suspended. But this long abstinence from food had its natural effects in prostrating all the powers of His sacred body. His humanity grew weak and sank from the same necessity which is experienced by every other child of man, when all means of sustenance are taken away. At the close of the forty days the miraculous interposition ceased, and then the cravings of hunger were felt in all their bitterness. Holy Scripture reveals the miraculous support vouchsafed during the days of His abstinence, and the subsequent coming on of the intense sufferings of hunger, in these brief and simple words; "And during

those days He had nothing to eat, and when they were ended, He afterward hungered." The temptation of Satan which we are about to consider, took place after all miraculous aid had been withdrawn, and when our Lord's human nature was left to its own unassisted weakness.

There is an apparent difference in the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke as to the actual commencement of the temptation of Satan. St. Matthew's words, "And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterwards an hungered. And when the tempter came to Him he said,"—seem to imply that Satan drew near to our Lord after the forty days were passed, and only then commenced his assaults. St. Luke's account opens to us a different view; "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted by the devil;" shewing that Satan was in direct and open intercourse with our Lord, exerting upon Him all his evil influences during the entire period of the forty days. The difference is only apparent, for St. Matthew's expression "the tempter came to Him," implies only a fresh mode of approach, not an approach for the first time. Satan varied his assaults. He came to

our blessed Lord under different forms, and with ever renewed devices. Each attempt was a fresh coming of the Evil One. St. Matthew only mentions a change in the order of the temptation, not its commencement, when he says that Satan came at the end of the forty days. The nature of the temptation during the forty days is not recorded; only the three distinct assaults which followed are revealed to us.

The first of the three recorded temptations of our blessed Lord derived its force from a twofold cause; from the exceeding depression and craving of appetite to which He was reduced; and secondly, from the superhuman power abiding in Him, and which He might have instantly exerted to relieve it. Satan did not know our Lord's real nature. He could not perceive the Divinity, veiled, as it was, in the suffering human form. Satan in his fall had lost all power of communication with God, and no longer knew the divine counsels, as angels are permitted to know. He could know of Christ only by the revelations made to mankind, by prophecy, or type, by the manifestations given at His birth and His baptism. But he could judge, even by such signs, that Jesus had power with God, though not that He was God Himself. He

must have marvelled at the humiliation and weakness in which the mysterious Visitor appeared, and hardly knowing perhaps the very meaning of the words he used, yet he felt that he stood in some awful presence, beholding One far greater than man, though reduced through suffering far below any other child of Adam, when he said, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." It was as if he had said, "How canst Thou endure such dreadful pain and oppression, when Thou hast power at an instant to provide means of relief? Why suffer such cravings, when all nature waits upon Thy bidding? Why submit to such degradation, to the disparagement of Thine own claims? Who can believe that Thou art what Thou sayest, when Thou canst not save Thyself from suffering and humiliation, unparalleled even among the fallen children of Adam? Canst Thou indeed be the Son of God, when Thou art encompassed and overwhelmed by the very lowest necessities of the fallen, sinful creatures of the dust?"

We may regard this temptation of our Lord as the very counterpart of that through which our first parents fell. "Why submit to the denial of the fair fruit which God has planted?"

Why, if thou art indeed Heaven's favoured child, endure this unjust command? Why not put forth thy hand and touch the fruit, when to touch it is at once to become as God? Why remain in your present ignorance, and not aim at your rightful rank in the order of God's creatures; and at once gratify the longing of your nature, and rise to the greatness and dignity to which you are destined?" Such was the subtle snare which Satan laid for Eve. It was the gratification of the natural appetite, working together with the desire of spiritual exaltation, beneath which she sank. By exciting these two powerful influences within her, Satan depraved her soul even in its original innocence. What he had found so successful in his first malicious assault upon man, that he now seeks to compass also upon the second Adam; only now as it seemed with far greater probability of success, fallen as human nature was into such weakness.

Our Lord was tempted, though without sin; He must have experienced therefore the inclination to satisfy His hunger through whatever means were offered to Him. He knew in Himself what man feels when tempted to satisfy hunger even by forbidden means. He knew and felt it, for

otherwise the temptation would have been no reality, and His sympathy with the tempted imperfect ; though in Him the consciousness of this very inclination was sinless. The agony and power of evil were tasted, but it left no stain, and caused no disturbance in the perfect peace of His soul.

When we seek to apply this portion of our Lord's trial to ourselves, we see one of the most extensive and prevailing causes of human iniquity. Under this temptation is to be classed all the evil that is connected with the wants of earthly life ; all the snares that beset the use of money ; whatever draws away from God those who know the difficulties of life, or count its gains. The special sin against which we are here warned, is the seeking what is lawful by unlawful means. The trial to which our blessed Lord was exposed, was to bear the cravings of hunger in a state of overpowering weakness, and to restrain His own will, which at a moment might have changed the stones into bread. He restrained His human will at the cost of the deepest self-sacrifice, obeying the divine. Here then is opened to us a wide range of trial to which every man in his measure is exposed.

We are not considering the pursuit of unlaw-

ful callings, or open acts of crime; these are extreme forms of evil, to which our Lord's temptation has no reference; it relates only to the trials which beset those who are walking in lawful ways, and who may be drawn aside from the path of God's will to obtain their ends. Such for instance are the inducements which men have to enter into places and connexions which are surrounded with spiritual danger for the sake of profit; or the arts and subterfuges, the lying and treachery, which attend buying and selling; the driving hard bargains; the selfish over-reaching, and outvying one's neighbour by greater cunning or activity; the neglect of religious duty for the increase of some desired good; in fact, the seeking in one way or other what the soul loveth, beyond what God approves, or before His time, or beside His ways.

Such snares are the more fatal because of the many base maxims of the world which justify such ways and actions, and such a spirit of life. "A man must live," it is said; "all do such things." And even the very doctrine which holy Scripture teaches of the necessity that a man should "provide for his own," is quoted, as the Evil One quotes the word of God, to sanction the sacrifice of honour, love, and duty to God and man, for

the sake of worldly interest. "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent," says the voice of God ; and why ? but because the desire and acquisition of gain is so fruitful a source of evil. How seldom will transactions of business bear the light ! How reckless are the powerful in using means for compassing their ends ! How pliant and cringing, how ready to yield to unlawful demands, are they that are in need !

Again, another extensive view of human sin, in connection with this trial of our Lord, is opened to us in the carefulness and mistrust in which men live. If well off in this world, then there seems to be rest ; but if uncertainty as to the future presses upon us, then what gloomy and unbelieving fears ; or if a loss be felt, then what complainings and discontent ! And from what does this restless anxiety arise, but from forgetfulness that all we have, or can have, proceeds from God ? The thought that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God," is not present to the mind as a reality. The idea that bread only is our stay ; that when sufficient is before us we need not fear, but when it fails there is no hope ; that all depends on the earthly means ; that we can believe only what we see ; that our own strength and our earthly

store are our stay, and not the living God,—this lies beneath the surface of all that perpetual unrest which besets the man of this world.

And this tendency leads on to yet darker forms of sin, and chiefly of two kinds: 1. It is the root out of which springs the spirit of covetousness, which in the judgment of God, and the awful language of His Scripture, is idolatry; for what is covetousness but a grasping, restless appetite for the satisfaction of nature's baser longings, a perpetual craving after more and more indulgence of the desires of this world's goods? And from what source does this arise but from believing that man's life consisteth, when God says it "consisteth *not*, in the abundance of the things that he possesseth?" It is the casting off of God, as our treasure and our stay, and resting our hope wholly on what is earthly. Covetousness cannot wait, cannot restrain its desire, it is in itself the intense and ruling indulgence of desire, which our Saviour taught us should be overcome even in the cravings of hunger and the entire loss of needful food.

2. It leads to a hoarding spirit. This is what St. Paul especially condemns, as "the trusting in uncertain riches, and not in the living God." There is indeed a lawful desire to lay by out of

present gains the means of future support. This forethought, in a spirit of dependence upon God, is expressly enjoined in the precept, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard." To take thought for the morrow, by storing up what abounds out of the present blessings which God gives to our labours, is but the exercise of a wise and religious prudence. But sin will manifest itself both in the spirit and the extent in which this care may be exercised. It becomes a sin if our hope for the future rests upon the treasure we have stored up; if the idea prevail that we have secured ourselves against future wants by the "much goods laid up for many years;" if we forget that the future disposal of our store is as much dependent on the will of God, as were the means of gathering it. None can be safer than those who have God for their treasure and exceeding great reward, whether they have earthly goods laid up, or whether their whole future dependence is on His ever-present and all-sufficient care. The goods laid up are not the ground of man's hope; they are but the means which God may employ to provide for our necessities. It is not merely the "moth and rust that doth corrupt, and the thief that doth break through and steal," but a thousand chances may occur, though each one under the

control of an ever-watchful providence ; and even a servant faithful as was " My servant Job " may see all the treasure of years dissipated in a moment by the breath of the passing storm ; even as the same servant in his destitution may see every loss restored sevenfold. The man who has the subsistence of generations to come laid up on earth, is in reality no safer or richer than he that has the same subsistence provided from day to day by the hand of God. He who trusts is in fact the richer, for he has God Himself pledged to His support by His own merciful promise ; " his bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure."

With this spirit of hoarding is connected the grievous sin of withholding what is due from God Himself, in His poor, or in the spiritual wants of souls for whom He died. Such a spirit, pleading in its justification that charity begins at home, shews in its practice that there too it ends. God has left His poor dependent on the abundance of those whom He has more richly blessed. He has made the very progress of His Church and the salvation of souls to rest on the liberality of the faithful. He has reserved His own right over the possessions of all who abound, that a part should be given back to Himself in

these His destitute members. To withhold this portion, then, is to rob God. But how many are there who in this spirit never give alms at all; who encourage wants that absorb all their means, or if their means increase, let their wants increase also; or if aught is spared, lay it up as their treasure upon earth, fearing to make themselves poor by giving to the poor, as if money thus given were lost to themselves. Others again, who have been led to give alms, yet should a need of retrenching come, first retrench their alms, sacrificing God, not themselves, cutting off what was due to Him, that they might not have to deny even a single artificial want, or the smallest bodily indulgence. They would give to God a stone that they might save themselves from the risk of any craving after even a fancied need. What a witness against such a spirit are the words of God: "If thou hast much, give plentifully; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little, for so gatherest thou thyself a good reward in the day of necessity." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and look, what he layeth out it shall be paid him again."

To overcome these many snares we must lay our foundation deep in self-denial and trust in God. Our lower life and all its requirements, and all its means of support, press upon us with a combined force, blinding us to our real, our higher life, and shutting out God from our view. We need to preserve a continual watchfulness and restraint, lest our whole spiritual life and our communion with God sink and die away beneath a miserable dependence on the creature. We need to rise to the contemplation of the great truth, that though unseen, unfelt, unperceived by any power of human sense, God is nevertheless the only sustainer of man in soul and body, whether it be by visible means that He vouchsafes to feed us, or whether it be by some direct communications of aid which are above all means. God Who sustained the weakness of humanity during the forty days and nights, and still upheld it in cravings and hunger, in conflict with the Evil One, is the Same Who gave forth bread to feed the many thousands on the shores of the sea of Galilee, multiplying endlessly the few barley loaves according to the wants of each member of that vast company, and the Same Who taught those whom He had miraculously fed to "labour

not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." God Himself is our life. The creatures are but the means through which He is pleased to act. He commands these means at His will, or He can dispense with means. He can provide out of His own inexhaustible fulness, visibly or invisibly, for the wants of those whom He has endowed with life. In giving life He has implied all needful aid for the support of the life which He gives. "Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast; how excellent is Thy mercy, O God; and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house: and Thou shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures, as out of the river. For with Thee is the well of life: and in Thy light shall we see light." Our life, then, is to abide with God, to seek our support only as He appoints, to remember that all we have is His, not ours, to be used by us, but for Him, whether to be given to others or to be taken to ourselves; and if means fail, to trust still to the same God, to raise up in the hour of need the sufficient remedy. But to have this blessed assurance, we are required to narrow our wants by the laws of Christian simplicity; to deny

our desires, that they may not outstep God's will; to mortify our appetites, that the Spirit may rule within us; to learn abstinence in the flesh, that we may know a purer communion with our Lord; to rise above the flesh, that we may "live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us;" to feel, that though "He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him;" to believe that in losing our dependence on God we are losing God Himself; that we arrive at our true destiny only as we realize here among earthly needs what the blessed St. Paul had attained, and wherein he lived: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Our blessed Lord suffered, that by His suffering He might constrain us to love the great principle, that man should live, as regards the use of all earthly means, in continual dependence upon the Divine Will. He has taught us by His own humiliations to reverence and obey that Will, even though we have to bear the loss of what seems most needful to us. To follow such a principle, and abide by His Example, necessarily

involves self-denial. Even intense suffering may at times be our lot, if we firmly act according to this principle, and in some hour of need, reject the proffered aid that would at once relieve our necessity. But will not He Who in the wilderness endured out of love to us, be ever at our side, in the depths of our temptation; and will not His unspeakable consolations and strength be "more than all that is against us," and "make us more than conquerors through Him Who loved us?" Will it not be an exceeding gain to bear even "the loss of all things, that we may win Christ?"

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

REFRESHMENT IN SORROW.

Ps. xxviii. 7. *Though I walk in the midst of troubles, yet shalt Thou refresh me.*

THE special lesson which the Church brings before our minds to-day, is that of God's comforting and refreshing His people under afflictions,—whether they be the afflictions which they suffer through their faithfulness to Him, or, which they may well be also, those that they suffer as a correction and punishment for their sins.

The whole season of Lent was intended to figure forth and to teach us that suffering and affliction is on the one hand the due chastisement for sin, and on the other, the appointed way to joy and glory. Lent is the time for penitence, and it is the preparation for Easter. Christ entered not into His glory, but He first suffered; and we, as sinners, all have need to endure chastisement.

But this Sunday reminds us how Almighty

God supports, sustains, and comforts those who are thus suffering. It brings before us the lesson of His tender love and sympathy, which will not allow us to suffer more than we can bear, and will with the suffering and affliction provide consolation.

For all of us, my brethren, it is necessary that we should think deeply of suffering and affliction as being due for our sins; we are concerned with the consideration of chastisement as being our proper portion, before consolation; for consolation can only be looked for by those who bear their sufferings patiently, who conform themselves obediently to the will of God, who suffer according to His will.

The Collect reminds us of this, and as it were, gives us the key-note to the services of the day. In it we pray "that we who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by His goodness."

And the Gospel and the first Lesson shew us the same things in history. The Gospel—which relates that our Blessed Saviour fed the hungry and fainting multitudes, on whom He had compassion; the first Lesson—which records Joseph's entertaining his brethren at a feast, when they had been suffering from a sore famine, and were

now in great fear lest they should be seized and taken for bondsmen. But there is this difference between the two cases. Those whom our Saviour fed in the wilderness represent to us persons who are suffering in consequence of their faithful attachment to Christ. They had, you know, left their homes and gone far away into a lone country, and had been for three days waiting on Him. They had left their homes that they might not lose any of His holy teaching, and they had followed Him, thinking only of being with Him, and of profiting by His presence, forgetful of what they might suffer in so doing. They figure forth to us sincere Christians who suffer in the way of their duty. These have given up the pleasures which the world offers, and which worldly men enjoy; they have sought only to learn of Christ, and to do His will; they have entirely given themselves up to Him, and in so doing, trouble, affliction, or distress of mind come upon them, they are cast down and seem quite helpless. On them it is that Christ has compassion. They may be quite sure that as He sympathized with the multitudes who were waiting on Him,—as indeed He seems to have felt for them, to have entered into their condition, and thought of their sufferings, more than His disciples did, or even than

they did themselves, so in like manner does He now feel for you who are cast down and distressed, who have difficulties, and trials, and temptations, when you are going on in the way of your duty, are truly loving Him, and desirous to please Him. Be assured that He knows your wants, that He feels for you, and that in His own good time He will relieve you. He will relieve you in ways far beyond what you can conceive and imagine. He who in the wilderness, where there was no food at all, (for where could they buy bread there in the wilderness?) made the five barley loaves and the two small fishes feed five thousand men besides women and children, can now, and will now deliver those who suffer patiently for His sake, though their condition seem to be quite hopeless.

This miracle then shews us how Jesus Christ relieves and refreshes those of His faithful servants who suffer for His sake.

I think however that the case of Joseph's brethren is one which even the most faithful will feel applies much more to themselves; for they were suffering in consequence of their wrong doings; their afflictions came upon them as a punishment for their sins. Benjamin indeed was not of the number of those who had sold

Joseph, yet Benjamin suffered with the others, but this is only what happens continually in the world; calamities, such as bad harvests, want, dearness of provisions and the like, come equally on good and bad, as a chastisement and as a means of improvement, according to their need. But as the consolation of the righteous under their suffering abounds beyond that of others, so was Benjamin's mess five times as much as any of theirs.

I say the sufferings of Joseph's brethren came upon them as the punishment for their sins, to punish them for what they had done, and to bring them to a better mind. They had you know out of envy and cruelty sold Joseph for a slave; they had deceived their father, pretending that he was dead; they did not know, perhaps they scarcely cared, what had become of him. Years passed away, and they probably most of them had quite forgotten it. They went on as if nothing had happened. They married, they had families. They sinned in various ways; God cut off the children of some of them, and they seemed to be brought to a better mind than the rest, but on the whole they appear to have forgotten their sin in the case of Joseph. It was the sin of years long gone by; they had forgotten

it, and they thought God had forgotten it. But not so. Their sin found them out. Famine came on the land, and they who had before been in prosperity, ploughing, sowing, and reaping abundantly, began to be in want. The famine was sore in the land, so that they looked even to die of hunger, as in countries less happy than our own many often do die; for Jacob said, "Get you down thither and buy food for us, that we may live and not die."

But, now, let us observe that the further afflictions which they suffered were inflicted on them by their brother himself. You remember how he treated them; he made himself strange, and spake roughly to them; he treated them as if they were not honest; he put them in prison for three days. Then he took their brother Simeon and bound him before their eyes, and kept him a prisoner in Egypt, and they had to go back to their father with the sad news that Simeon was a captive; they had to bear their father's reproaches, to witness his distress, and to hear again his mourning for the loss of Joseph. More trouble came on them while persuading their father to allow Benjamin to go with them, and again still more after this from Joseph's seizing Benjamin and threatening to keep him; they had

to look forward to bring down their father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.

. Now in all this history there is one point which it is most important to observe: I mean, that their brother Joseph himself inflicted this distress upon them—it was all, so to say, his doing. He might, if he had thought right, have said at the very first, I am Joseph. He might then have given them all the good of the land of Egypt, and they would have had nothing but joy and gladness. And why did he not do so? It was not, as we may suppose, without special guidance from Almighty God, who wonderfully directed him by a wisdom beyond his own. There was not on Joseph's part any want of love to his brethren or to his father; his love was a most tender and overflowing love; how anxiously did he enquire about them and their father! how had he to restrain himself lest they should discover by his emotion who he was! how did he turn himself about from them, and weep, even at the very time he was causing them pain; shewing that he did what he did out of real love for them, and for their good! just as a parent forces a child to do what is painful to it, or some doctor cuts off a limb disregarding the cries of the patient, knowing it is the truest kindness.

In this respect Joseph's conduct seems to be a figure and a copy as it were of the dealings of Almighty God with us, for He does not willingly grieve nor afflict the children of men, whilst yet He does cause them to suffer much for their real benefit.

And Joseph's brethren, you will remember, saw why it was that these troubles came upon them; their troubles called to their remembrance the sin that they would otherwise have forgotten, and we may trust brought them to a sincere repentance for it. They said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." They had not listened to his entreaties; their own are now disregarded.

And so when the son of the widow of Sarepta who had received Elijah into her house, died, she said, "Art thou come to bring my sin to remembrance?" The death of her son reminded her of her sin: she felt that she deserved punishment, and the punishment was now come upon her.

And surely this is the right way of viewing all our distress, and it is the proper use to which to

turn afflictions, which God sends upon us in order to bring us to a true sense of our state.

God Almighty deals with us as He dealt with the brethren of Joseph. He afflicts us out of love, as a chastisement for our past sins, and to bring us to a true repentance for them, and then, lest we should be overborne by His chastisements, if we take them aright, He sends us comforts and refreshments under them.

We have all our troubles, some heavier, some lighter; some open and seen by others, some secret, which no one knows but ourselves.

But when such afflictions do come upon us, how ought we to feel respecting them? We ought to look back on our past lives, and consider what our sins have been, and how much more we deserve to suffer for them. We should say to ourselves, I have indeed sinned against God, therefore is this evil come upon me.

And there are some kinds of sorrow which are the natural consequence of doing wrong, and at once appear to be the punishment of it. If for instance a person has been irregular and dissolute in his life, and bears about with him a weakened and ruined constitution, every pang he suffers is a direct punishment and scourge as it were for his sin. If again people have been

careless and wasteful when they had the means of saving money, and are afterwards reduced to want; what they suffer then in shortness of food is really God's punishment upon them for their past extravagance; and they ought to feel, or even sometimes be left or made to feel it, as Joseph's brethren were—even by a brother who loved them. Or again, if in times of prosperity in any place, as may have happened here, men who were taking good wages neglected God and their Church, shewing no thankfulness to Him for His great mercy and goodness to them; but living and speaking as if they could do without God: when God Almighty withdraws those mercies, and they are like the prodigal son reduced to want,—they should look on this as a punishment sent on them by God, and should turn themselves to Him in earnest and true repentance: trying now at least to amend their lives, and with sincere sorrow for their sins and patient bearing of their troubles, seek forgiveness at His hands. He punishes us in order that we may repent and return to Him. “Turn ye unto Me,” He says, “for I desire not the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from His evil way and live.”

‘This, I say, is the wise and reasonable way in

which to regard God's chastisements of us ; and it will enable us more than anything else to bear them patiently, and even cheerfully. I do not say that we shall always be able to see this connection between the sin and the punishment. But we may always seriously and sorrowfully call to mind in how many ways we have done wrong, and how much we deserve any amount of punishment from God's hand, and then earnestly endeavour to amend our known faults, to ask of God forgiveness for them, and to thank Him for awakening us by any means to a true sense of our condition, and to a real and deep sorrow for what we have done wrong.

If we bear our afflictions in this patient and obedient spirit, then, whatever they may be, we have this consolation, that we are suffering according to the will of God, and that this must at last be for our good. Then may we commit ourselves to Him, give up ourselves and all our prospects, all our hopes and all our fears,—to be dealt with according to His good pleasure ; then are we in the right state of mind to pray, as in the Collect, that we who are justly punished for our sins, by the comfort of His grace may mercifully be relieved. We must not hasten His work. It may be, He will give us the portion of the best of His ser-

vants, to be an afflicted people, to be as He Himself was, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; but this we are quite sure of, He will not allow us to suffer beyond what we are able to bear—as is our day, our strength shall be; and He who provided for the fearful and conscience-stricken brethren of Joseph the rich refreshment feast in his house, so that they were merry: He who, when He saw the multitudes, had compassion on them, and would not send them away fasting to their own homes, lest they should faint by the way, will, by methods of His own, quite inscrutable to us, give strength, support, and refreshment, to His Christian people now. Even as after His own fast of forty days, after His own anguish, His own temptations—the devil departed from Him, and angels came and ministered to Him.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

PSALM xl. 15. *Innumerable troubles are come about me; my sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up: yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me.*

THE present season has called us to retirement, and to the examining and acquiring the knowledge of our consciences, by the example of our Lord Himself in His fast of forty days alone in the wilderness. We are now coming to the days in which His bitter sufferings, those most convincing evidences of the sinfulness of sin, are brought as it were close to us.

Of what use, some may ask, is the self-knowledge, which we are so often urged to acquire? In itself, and if it ends in itself, it is of no use at all: but as a means to an end it is mighty and availing indeed; a means to bring us to a thorough realization and consistent sense of the debts which we owe to the justice of Al-

mighty God, that is, our sins, and also of our poverty and utter need of mercy and atonement. To make what I have said clearer, let us take the case of a person newly beginning self-examination, "communing for the first time with his own heart in his chamber and being still;" let us suppose him to commence with the day which he has just spent. He reviews his actions through it, at first calmly, almost carelessly, until he is startled by recalling several sins of thought and speech and action of no small moment; he finds several duties to God and to man left neglected and undone; he remembers several,—far more than he ever expected,—open and clear acts of wilful sin in greater or less degree on his part; and all this in the course of what he would generally have considered a well-spent day. He stops a moment astonished. He thinks of yesterday, the day before—it is the same, just the same, or worse. He looks back still, and such days are multiplied by weeks, and weeks of such days are multiplied by months, and months by years; and here and there the gloomy sameness of the retrospect is broken by the sight of darker deadlier sins, which do not need the aid of memory, but stand out in fearful distinctness, like way-marks on the downward road.

“Who can tell how oft he offendeth?” Who can with earnestness enough pray to be cleansed from the almost infinite number of his secret, unnoticed and forgotten faults?

And this is not all, by any means. We do not at first see the utter falsity of many of our moral principles, the subtle evil of many of our commonest habits of feeling and action, the thorough opposition to the Gospel embodied in the maxims of life which we have adopted without thought from our neighbours and from the world. This knowledge does not come at once. It is only when we try to find out the reasons of our so often failing in spite of our resolutions, when we really wish to make our daily life better, and set to work in earnest to correct our faults and sins; it is only then, that these deep roots of vice are laid bare, and these remote and long-hidden sources of sinfulness are thoroughly traced out; so day by day, and little by little, in weariness, in sadness of heart—yet not, by Christ’s mercy, in despair—we learn to know what we are, what our consciences are, what our lives are, and how most unlike they are to the pattern which Jesus gave, and to the likeness which He will look for in those who are to be His own.

This self-knowledge, as it can hardly be acquired in the way I have described without assisting grace, is a great step toward repentance. It begins in sorrow ; it grows with confession of sin ; it humbles man's pride ; it exalts God's mercy ; as it increases, it brings out our own exceeding worthlessness, and our Lord's exceeding love more and ever more ; it rebukes spiritual carelessness ; it chastises spiritual presumption ; it shews us the true nature and value of the means of grace ; and leads us to use them that we may be strengthened and comforted in our trials.

And all the while the daily practice of self-examination becomes easier to us, becomes more natural, if I may so use the word. Our prayers become more earnest, our repentance more lasting, our common life more holy. Though many evils are still with us and round us, though "our sins have taken a hold upon us," from which we can never be wholly freed until we die, yet are we "able to look up" with both hope and love. Yea, though the more we search out and reckon up our sins, the more their number seems to grow, until like the hairs of our head, they seem past reckoning ; yet still if our faith fail not, our heart shall not fail either ; in spite of

all, we can rest in the truth of the promise, that "if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged."

Such is self-knowledge, as it is worked out in Christian men by the habit of daily self-examination.

But to some, self-knowledge comes after another sort: and to them to whom it so comes, the very recollection of how it comes is dreadful.

Sometimes a sinner without preparing for it, without wishing for it, without being ready for it, sees his spiritual state all at once by a sudden revelation. "Fearfulness and trembling come upon him" as it is made plain before him. "A horrible dread overwhelms" his very being as there appear in their truth before him, life and his abuse of it, death and his unfitness for it, judgment and its unbending justice, eternity which comes after judgment. Time, grace, opportunities, mercies, warnings, calls, he has had them, and has let them go. Earthly pleasure, earthly indulgence, earthly pride, earthly vanity, these have been his hope and trust; and now, even while he is yet alive, they shrink into nothingness before the stern reality of judgment and eternity. What folly, madness, crime on his part, to choose the empty and the false and refuse the real and the true! But this is not all,

nor yet the worst. There are his sins; his eyes are opened, and they stand before him, as by a miracle. Their temptations are gone, the enticements in which they were wrapped round are stripped away from them, they appear as they are: he sees them as a disembodied spirit would see them; hatreds, lusts, and lyings, without excuse and without disguise, are before him in their own earthliness, sensuality, and devilishness. Crowded all together, on this side of the shrinking conscience and on that, they are "more in number than the hairs of his head;" they seem in their long unheeded accumulation of unrepentance to be infinite, each one different, and yet each the same. And as in that fearful disease, of which we have read, each hair upon the head is said to assume a separate life and to have a pain and suffering of its own, so now each individual sin that he has committed among all that innumerable crowd, starts up clear and plain before him with its own proper misery, its own distinct sense of anguish and annoy. They press close to, and force themselves upon the soul: they "take hold upon" the conscience, and cling, as it were, around it. They speak, as it might be, in the spirit's ear, "We are yours; you have made us for yourself; and now we are

a part of you,—even for ever.” They bid it drink that cup of sharp fear and utter self-contempt, which is bitterer to drink than even the mingling of vinegar and gall. There is sin every where: he sees no help, no rest, no light: all is sin; his pleasures sin; his hopes sin; his comforts sin; “he is not able to look up.” There hangs a cloud, black, awful, impenetrable, between him and God. He cannot “look up” to heaven, for it is heaven that he has lost. The cross is a terror to him, for it is the cross that he has despised. The thought of the love of Christ only adds to that anguish, which burns up his spirit “like a fire-brand.” His soul vexes itself with reproaches, and gnaws upon itself; his heart despairs of peace for ever: and yet this is not all that he feels. He feels that he cannot trust himself, any more than he can look for comfort to God. He feels his own utter weakness and cowardice and unresolve. He feels that he needs must sink under the burden of wickednesses which are upon his head, sore indeed, and “too heavy for him to bear.” He sees now too clearly the cunning of that ghostly enemy, whom he had thought his friend, whom he had served as a master, and fallen down and worshipped as a lord; he feels his

triumph at having "smitten his life down to the ground" and having laid him captive in that darkness of despair, wherein are laid "the men who have been long dead." He can find no hope of remedy, no prospect of escape: "the snares of death have compassed him round about:" he has lived so much of his life in this sin-worn state, this living death, this life without grace and without God: he dreads to number the years that he has passed: there seems only continuance of darkness, continuance of despair, continuance of sin, continuance of unbelief without end or hope. Thought is misery: and yet he must think; and the more he thinks, the plainer his sins become, the more fearful his condition proves. "He is so fast in prison that he cannot get forth." There is nothing left, but the cry, Woe is me! It is a foretaste of the wrath to come. This very mortal life of his is "drawing nigh unto hell." His conscience turns upon him with the anger of a judge, and pointing to the sins in which he has taken pleasure, and to the love which he has lost, bids him—Begone, thou cursed.

It is not every soul which goes through such a crisis as this: not even the greater number of souls; but only those which God has made

strong for evil or for good, and earnest in what they suffer and in what they do. But such a crisis some of you, my brothers, may have past through, and many of you must have heard of. It is not easily forgotten: the memory of it cannot soon be done away with, and the effects of it never can. From that conflict the man comes forth changed: the arrows of the Almighty have not pierced his soul for nothing; neither hath "His hand pressed him sore" in vain. He comes forth either to life or death, either with most repentant hope and trembling new-awakened love, with a spirit which has come again to him like the spirit of a little child, or with a seared conscience and a heart like stone:—there is no alternative, no medium between the two, yet it is oftener by our Father's grace with the former.

Some of those who profess and call themselves Christians have commonly styled this fearful struggle Conviction of Sin, and have ventured to assert that it is a necessary step to change of life, and a common and usual interval between indifference and repentance. But God forbid that a trial like this, however deserved, should be the Christian's common lot: it is too painful, too full of danger for that. It is not, as some falsely fancy, the throe-pangs of the new birth.

It cannot be. No: that intensity of mental pain is rather the misery of "him that is at the point to die." It is the last agony of the life of grace within us. It is the forewarning and portentous stirrings of the Holy Ghost before He departs finally and for ever from the temple of our body; before He says, as He said once in the sin-defiled temple on Moriah, Let Us go hence. It is the "yet once more" of God's shaking our very heart and life and spirit, as Jesus comes for the last time, leaving if we refuse Him, the blood of our souls upon our heads.

But for the way forth from this place of darkness, from these innumerable troubles of the conscience, and this failing of the heart in the grasp of unnumbered sins?—There is but one. It is the going forth with Him Who in Gethsemane felt the hour of "the powers of darkness," Who on Golgotha cried "My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Who "descended into hell," Who was in all points tempted, and has in all points suffered like as we have done, yet alone was sinless in His suffering. It is the fact,—equally real and equally a fact, whether we feel it and believe in it, or whether we do not,—that we have been made once for all "members of Christ," "members of His body, of His flesh,

and of His bones ;” the fact, that man’s life and man’s nature, yes, even our own particular life and nature, have been taken into His ; that our agony is a portion in His agony ; our darkness in His darkness ; our desolation in His desolation ; even as His sufferings have been accepted in the place of ours. The sinner is raised up from that dark abyss of self-torment and self-contempt, how, perhaps he knows not ; but if he can only believe that he had been made Christ’s, then he will feel and see how by “ His agony and bloody sweat,” that good and loving Lord delivered him. He will feel then that in that time of trial, and at all times, His grace is sufficient for help, and His love more than sufficient for pardon. That the penitent and woe-stricken sinner needs but ask for the one and trust unto the other, and his despair is gone. However he has despised them for the past, however he has sinned in the time gone by, yet his “ sin is not unto death,” if he do but yearn toward them for the future. “ Troubles may come about us,” it is true ; they must needs come ; while we are in the world and in the flesh we shall “ have tribulation ;” but He who suffered for us, and is suffering in us, will take away their point and sting of sin, and unite our

sufferings to His, and us to Him. Whatever hold our sins may have, we must "look up," look up to Him, who is the way out of sorrow, the truth amid lyings, the life beyond death. His good can overcome evil; His "love is stronger than death;" His mercies are "more in number" than our sins. Surely our conscience, when in trouble, can rest in perfect peace on His tenderness, Who supposes that they will love Him the most to whom He forgives the most. In very deed our hearts can never "fail" us, while we possess Him for a Saviour Who said of old, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

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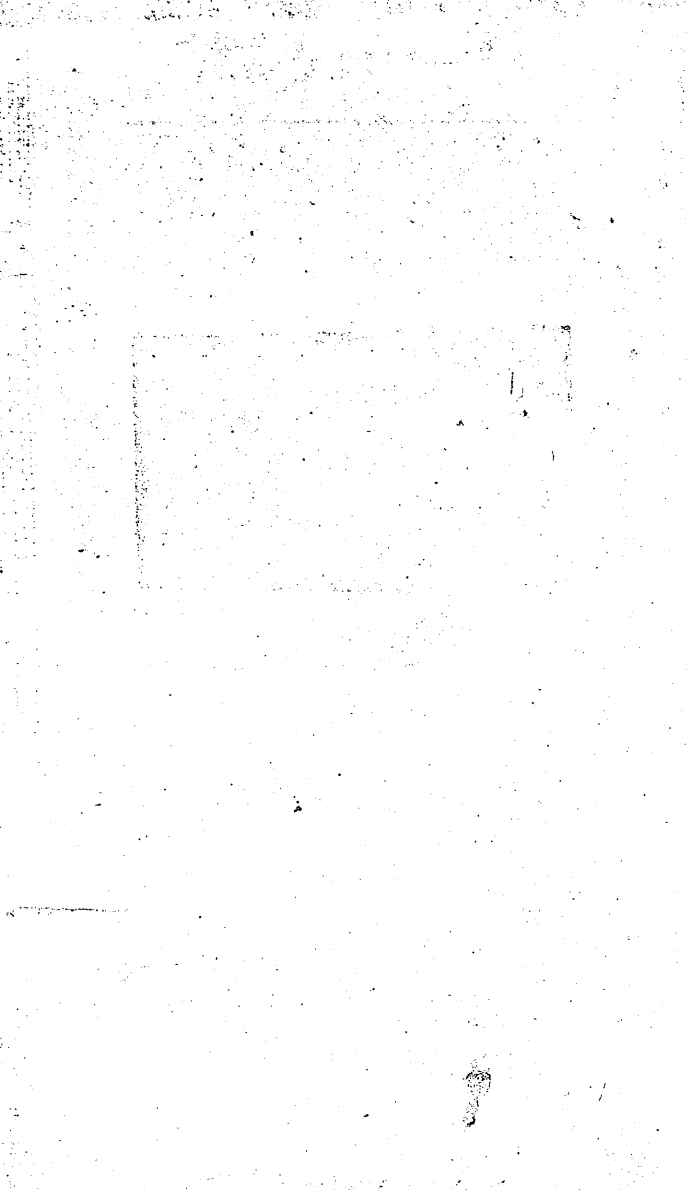


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PSALM viii. 3, 4. *When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?*

THIS grand and deep meditation of the Psalmist belongs in an especial manner to this day. Our Lord Himself has for ever connected it with this day. When He had entered into Jerusalem amidst the Hosannas of the crowds who followed Him into the city, He entered into the temple, by an awful act of authority cast out the buyers and sellers, and, working miracles of mercy to the last, healed the blind and lame amidst the Hosannas of the children. "And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things which He did, and the children crying in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were sore displeased, and said

unto Him, Hearest Thou what these say? and Jesus said unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" He silenced the gainsayers, and accepted the homage of little children, by quoting the words of David himself, hinting that the very grandest and deepest meanings of their own sweet Psalmist of Israel were hidden in those children's praises. Has He in any other way connected this grand and deep psalm with this wonderful season of Passion-tide? Yes, He has done so in the abundance of revelations vouchsafed after His Ascension to the great preacher of Christ crucified. St. Paul himself shews us that it has its deepest meaning in the mysteries we have been since Christmas commemorating, and which we close on Ascension day. He opens to us a view in comparison of which all the glories even of the boundless universe, overwhelming as they are, are as nothing in importance. Great beyond all thought as are the mysteries of the visible creation, He would have us reflect that those of the invisible world beyond are yet greater than they. Marvellous as is the thought that the great Creator of the millions of worlds around us should be mindful of a weak, frail, sinful, short-lived crea-

ture like man, and visit him in the course of His never-failing providence, the humiliation of the Son of God to visit him in person, to take our human nature upon Him, to be born in the world, to pass through the trials of this mortal life, to suffer and to die, and rise again and carry with Him to the highest heavens our very nature, is beyond all comparison more marvellous ; and yet more, that this should be the earnest of His final victory over all the powers of evil, and that last enemy, death.

Indeed, to the supernaturally illuminated and enlarged mind of St. Paul, to the man once caught up into paradise, the Psalmist's meditation on the grandeur and beauty of the visible universe itself seems even to fade and melt away in the idea of the world to come ; and the view of man made originally a little lower than the angels, and then fallen and mortal, is lost in the prospect unfolded to the Christian in Christ, "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and crowned with glory and honour." Such is the mystery which angels desire to look into, as revealed to St. Paul. "Unto the angels hath He not subjected the world to come, whereof we speak : but once in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou

art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, Thou crownest him with glory and honour."

Now these thoughts are more than ever touching now, when the vast extent of the universe is so wonderfully unfolding. The Psalmist stood aghast as he meditated at eventide or midnight at the glorious sight of the moon and stars, and shrunk at the thought of his own nothingness in the sight of the Almighty, when he reflected that all he saw were but the shadows or outskirts of the glory of the King eternal, immortal, invisible. What must be our thoughts at the discovery that some stars are suns probably, and that there are suns upon suns beyond? that not only is man, weak, frail, sinful, miserable man, cared for and visited, but is so tenderly loved amid all his sin, and misery, and weakness, and frailty, that from the highest of all heavens, Christ, the Son of God, came down and took upon Him our flesh to save us?

Truly as the mysteries of the visible creation unfold to the eye and mind of man, and he gains a larger insight into the immense grandeur of the universe, should the Christian pray for a greater measure of spiritual knowledge and un-

derstanding; a more over-whelming reverence and love at every fresh glimpse of the greatness and goodness of God, and a deeper knowledge of that great mystery Himself; and an ever-increasing insight into the unspeakable grandeur and depth of the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, Christ, suffering and crucified.

So at every one of the stages of our blessed Saviour's passage through the world, in starlight nights at Christmas and Epiphany, now at Passion-tide, and so on to Ascension day, this psalm may well engage the profound meditation of the Christian in connection with the seasons as they pass. The Christian seasons all make us cry, "Lord, what is man?" "I came forth from the Father," He said at the last supper, "and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father;" and at every step of His earthly pilgrimage, with these overwhelming thoughts of who He was, and whence He came, and why He came into this world, we may well take up the words of the Psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"

The Church seems to bring it home to us in all its force in the course of lessons we have been

lately reading. At Septuagesima God created man in His own image, the last and greatest work of the great creation. "In the image of God," it is repeated, "created He him." "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." At Sexagesima we heard of his fall, and the sentence past of "dust to dust." Through the Sundays in Lent we have been reading the history of sin and sorrow, dust and ashes, in the touching records of Genesis, rendered the more touching by the accounts of God's mindfulness in His special providences and promises to the family of Abraham. Day by day through Lent we have been praying for contrition and renewal, with the affecting appeal to Him, "Who hatest nothing that Thou hast made," called by the season to ask ourselves what we are, and whither we are going.

So then, the Church has brought us step by step from the closed gates of paradise to the foot of the Cross. And all our communings, I suppose, with our own hearts, will bear witness to this most affecting course of discipline, shewing us from whence we have fallen, and where we are to find the only remedy. Every where there is the inward witness of God's image, still re-

maining, however darkened and defiled, in lost and fallen man ; every where sense of guilt, the witness of lost innocence ; every where sense of ignorance, the witness of a forfeited knowledge ; every where sense of misery, the witness of former happiness ; every where sorrow of soul and suffering of body, and every where fear of death. All things around and all within us bear witness to a time when "the generations of the world were healthful, and there was no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of death upon the earth." No, all that is great and good within us says in plain language, "God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity." God made not death, neither hath pleasure in the destruction of any living. All that is base and evil within us tells us, and more than all the fear of death bears witness to St. Paul's words, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Yet, in the midst of all our ruin, God never left Himself without witness ; and amidst all our guilt and misery we have had tokens of His mindfulness of us, and have been vouchsafed His gracious visitings.

To what did all this mindfulness of us and

these gracious visitings point? Surely to that tender love towards mankind mentioned in the collect of this day, shewn in the holy Incarnation, sufferings, and death, of our Lord and Saviour—to “Jesus, made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death,”—that He by the grace of God might taste of death for every man.

Many Christians know no more of Christ than that He suffered and died for them. To follow Him as all the seasons teach us, and as this season teaches us, through all the latter days of His Flesh, to acquaint ourselves with Him, as born to suffer and to die, in order to meet the deepest needs and to heal the deepest wounds in human nature, is the way truly to know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings.

The question is, how, being brought to the inquiry, “Lord, what is man?” we shall find an answer in the life, and passion, and death, of our Lord and Saviour.

The Hosannas of Palm Sunday may well end and die away with a meditation like this; and we may well pray for the minds of babes and sucklings to understand, and the mouths of babes and sucklings to speak of, the lessons of humility and patience which it contains.

I say a meditation: the season calls for medi-

tation, and we have need of devout meditation on such a subject. How many are content with reading of Christ crucified! How many are content with talking of Him! How many are content with occasional good feelings, or vivid impressions on the imagination! But these impressions may pass away like a dream. Good feelings may go as they come. Awakened affections may run into mere sickly sentiment. What shall engage the highest and best faculties of that wonderful soul on which God's image was once traced, and to which by conformity with Christ it is to be restored? What shall help to engage them all; to recall them from other objects, and fix them on the true one?

If it has seemed good to Almighty God, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings, and to provide that those sufferings should be related so distinctly and so simply, and with such affecting reality in the Gospels read this week, He would by the very fact challenge our attention and affection and meditation. The very fact that the Son of God should so pass through the world demands attention of mind. The way in which He passed through it, by suffering,

seems singularly calculated to touch the heart. The reason why He so passed through it, to be our great Example and Comforter in life, as well as our great Sacrifice for sin, and our Saviour from death, gives it a personal interest and importance to every soul, which must call for reflection.

The words of St. Paul, that He tasted of death for "every man," brings the subject home with great force to the heart and conscience of each. The picture as it were placed by him before the eye of the mind,—of many sons following the Captain of their salvation to glory, Himself made perfect through sufferings, and His followers knowing Him and the fellowship of His sufferings,—surely will make us ask ourselves one by one how far we are in any way like soldiers under His banner, are keeping our eyes upon Him, are really in any sense whatever following His steps. It is a picture which connects, so to say, the history of the Passion, nearly two thousand years ago, with every succeeding age. It reminds us, that although He suffered but once, and that in one place, His chief sufferings borne within this one week, His death undergone at one moment in one day, and that many ages ago, in a distant country, every soul now living has as near and personal concern in it, as those who

were living when He died, and were either spectators of His death, or actors in it. The virtue of that One Sacrifice is infinite and everlasting ; it reaches all persons, all times, and all places. Well is it said, "by virtue of that redemption purchased once for all, He has an entire absolute right of dominion over every one of us, and every one of us has as entire an interest in His death as if all He did and suffered in the days of His humiliation, He had done and suffered for us alone."

Now this will help to shew us why all He did and suffered has been so minutely written for our learning, and why every one in his own age, and country, and station, and condition in life, should learn according to his measure to meditate on all that our Lord did and suffered in the days of His Flesh. The sons He would bring to glory should watch their Saviour's countenance, listen for His voice, obey His word of command, and follow where He would lead them. His every action, it has been said, is our instruction. There is no miracle in which we are not personally concerned. There is no parable in which we have not the same interest as those who heard it. We should stand as it were as among the spectators of His miracles, and observe all their circumstances. We should mingle with the disciples as

they gather round Him to hear His parables or ask Him questions in the house, and converse with Him by the way. Our houses and cottages should realize a holy presence as we read of Martha and Mary. We have need to weigh His lesson to Martha, and His approval of Mary. His presence in chambers of sickness and death is a blessed earnest of His unseen presence in like scenes with the sick and dying. His love of the poor and teaching of the poor, a pattern for all Christians in all ages. His holy infancy and childhood, His love of little children, His lessons from little children, all set forth to us in the Gospels to the very life, ought to be as fresh to us at every font, in every house and school, as if we had been with the shepherds or wise men to the manger at Bethlehem, or had seen Him take them up in His arms or stretch out His hands to bless them. His acceptance of their praise on this day should remind us in all our dealings with them how sacred is childhood to Him, and that it is only in proportion as we are converted and become as little children, that either the words of our mouths or the meditations of our hearts will be acceptable in His sight.

Everywhere we must bear in mind the thought that He is God, and so everywhere, as we hear

and read of what He did and suffered, silently adore Him ; but all these considerations will shew us in the most touching way how entirely He is man, and bring home to us in the daily circumstances of our lives, and even in our inmost hearts and consciences, the eye, “ten thousand times brighter than the sun,” of Him who perfectly knows us, through the eye which shed tears at the grave of Lazarus, which wept over impenitent Jerusalem this morning, which “looked upon Magdalene at the feast, on Peter in the high-priest’s hall, on the thief on the cross.”

Surely in all this we must come to see a meaning in the word “mindful,” and in the word “visit,” on which the faith and hope and love of the Christian can never sufficiently dwell. When religion is thus brought home to us by the history of our Lord’s life on earth, so as to hallow our everyday life, and all our nearest and dearest relations in it, we must come to feel that we are not only very fearfully and wonderfully made, but very fearfully and wonderfully dealt with. “Lord,” we may well exclaim, “what is man, that Thou art *thus* mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou thus visitest him?”

And what has been here said of the way in

which the Gospel meets us and converses with us in the common circumstances of life, will be felt to be more deeply true in our most pressing needs and sorest trials. The long lessons of this day and this week are not to be heard as a dry narrative, with dry hearts, and even dry eyes. They touch that question, Lord, what is man? with a thrilling power, and answer it in its deepest meaning as felt in the depth of the heart. Job asks, "What is man, that Thou shouldest magnify him, and Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him?" And he elsewhere gives that affecting account of man which we are brought so often to feel in the most affecting occasions of life: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost Thou open Thine eyes," he asks, "upon such an one?"

Now it is just upon such an one, on a sinful, short-lived, miserable, frail creature, that our Lord and Saviour seems to open His eye, not, as Job feared, of judgment, but of unspeakable mercy and loving-kindness, in His sorrows and sufferings and death. Is man, as born of a woman, born in sin? Christ vouchsafed to be born of a woman, of a virgin, without spot of sin, to re-

deem him. Is man of few days, and so in constant fear of death? Christ came into the world and dwelt in it less than half the space of man's life, and with death ever before Him. Is sinful man full of trouble, of sorrow of heart and pain of body? So was the Man of Sorrows. No portion of the burthen of man's sin not borne, no sorrow unfelt for, no suffering unknown to Him who "tasted of death for every man," who bare all our griefs and carried all our sorrows by a perfect sympathy, and felt the burthen of our sins in His soul in the garden, and bare them in His own body on the cross. Does man come forth and is he cut down like a flower? The very Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys, in the day of His humiliation, grew up as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground, and was "cut off out of the land of the living." Does man flee as a shadow? It is the very voice of Christ in the Psalmist, belonging to the very time of His Passion itself: "I am poor and needy, and My heart is wounded within Me. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth."

So truly then did the Son of God in taking our flesh upon Him shew how He knows us. And now that He is ascended up on high, He is yet mindful of us, and by His Holy Spirit, another

Comforter "visits" us. We see not yet all things put under Him; but every sin repented of, every wound healed, every heart cleansed, every sorrow soothed, every suffering lightened, every death-bed cheered, is a fresh proof of the never-failing efficacy of His sufferings and death; a fresh earnest of His final triumph; and every return of the season which calls us to meditate upon these things, a fresh call to us to pray more and more earnestly that we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means we may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

MONDAY BEFORE EASTER.

KNOWLEDGE GAINED BY MEDITATION.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10. *That I may know Him,...and the fellowship of His sufferings.*

MUCH is said in the wonderful days in which we live about knowledge, and the diffusion of knowledge. The prophet's words, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," are fulfilling to an extent which surpasses all thought. Not only are the ends of the earth brought together, but mysteries and knowledge of all sorts in the natural world, hidden from generations before us, are being discovered day by day all around us. Much is said also about the diffusion of religious knowledge, and it is a consoling thought that the vast intercourse of nations for purposes of this world may be made subservient to the growth of the kingdom of heaven, that those who are running to and fro are carrying the everlasting Gospel with them, and that side by side with that deep stirring of minds by which so many mysteries in nature, and so much knowledge of things in

heaven and earth is unfolding, there is a deepening sense of the greatness and infinite everlasting importance of those highest mysteries and master-knowledge for which St. Paul renounced all other, and without which it will be found that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit, that in much wisdom is much grief, and that he who increaseth knowledge only increaseth sorrow."

Thus the prophet's words, "Many shall run to and fro," instead of merely carrying our eyes in wild astonishment to the ends of the earth, contain an earnest of that time spoken of, in the close of the Passion psalm, as the final result of the Passion itself. "All the ends of the world shall remember themselves and be turned unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him:" and of the fulfilment of the great promise of the Father to His Incarnate Son, "Desire of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession." And again, the words, "Knowledge shall be increased," instead of merely distracting our thoughts over so many kinds of the knowledge which puffeth up, will direct them to the promise, that saving knowledge shall keep pace with

it, that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,"—with the knowledge of Christ crucified: and to the hope and prayer that that knowledge may not only spread but deepen.

It was constant matter of joy and thankfulness to the great apostle chosen and ordained to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, that in going from country to country he saw everywhere an earnest of the triumph of the gospel, and carried with him the savour of this knowledge wherever he went. "Now thanks be unto God," he says to the Corinthians, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." And doubtless he would fain have said to every place where he planted the Church what he said to them: "I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by Him in all utterance and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you, so that ye come behind in no gift."

Now, ought it not to be our earnest prayer, who boast that the Bible is translated into so many living languages, and the everlasting Gospel

preached to almost every nation under heaven, and pray at this holy season for the conversion of all; ought it not to be our prayer, that in every place where Christ crucified is preached, what St. Paul calls "the savour of His knowledge" may be made manifest,—not only the written word printed, to be read by the outward eye, and its sacred truths declared with the tongue, to be heard by the outward ear, but that the demonstration of the Spirit and of power may attend its diffusion through the world. The triumph of the gospel is not shewn so much in its spread throughout the world as in its power upon the soul, not so much in its diffusion over the surface as in its working in the depths. It must be what St. John calls the "unction from the Holy One" which must give richness of utterance to Christian teachers, and richness of knowledge to the taught, must discover and communicate the surpassing richness of the written Word. It is the Holy One, who sheds the savour of His knowledge, like Mary's ointment, through the Church, that must carry home its pervading and penetrating influence and divine sweetness to the inmost recesses of the soul, and shew the blessed effects of that influence and sweetness in the lives and conversations of

Christians. And though in its course through the world divine knowledge will be as truly a savour of death unto death to some as a savour of life unto life to others; wherever it proves to be a savour of life unto life, it will be by being made the devout study and deep meditation of the Christian.

Why have the evangelists under the guidance of the Holy Spirit related so minutely the whole history of Christ crucified? Surely because He would have us so realize the whole scene in all its particulars, that our souls may "suck every letter." Why does the holy Church throughout all the world read them in the public service but to follow up this gracious design, to set forth Christ crucified before the eye, that the mystery may be written on the heart? Why is this holy season kept, not merely by the public services at church and by reading the history of our Lord's Passion, but by quiet retirement, as best we may, from the busy world without,—why, but that the scene which passes before us may be marked and realized and dwelt upon at home? Thus only shall we come to "know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings."

The most wonderful and awful sight the world ever saw must not be regarded with a passing

glance ; it demands profound attention. Nor in those who are more or less for the time touched by it is it enough that it awakens a passing sentiment or feeling. We must not pass by as if the spectacle were nothing to us ; it is one in which all ages and all countries are alike interested, in which every soul of man is most nearly and personally concerned. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, must be brought to feel and understand that “ to know all things without knowing Christ is to know nothing, but that if they know Christ it is enough if they know nothing else.” What does the Author and Finisher of our faith tell us of this knowledge in the solemn prayer which He addressed to His Father in the presence of His disciples, after the last supper ? “ This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” What does he elsewhere tell us of the Teacher and learner of this knowledge ? “ I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father : and no man knoweth who the

Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Whatever be the deep and full meaning of the word "to know," we must be sure that this knowledge is the very highest of all knowledge, but that it lies within the reach of the lowliest. The power of God in the gospel is a hidden power; the wisdom of God a hidden wisdom: "Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God," is hidden, and it is only so far as in humble faith and true penitence, with a childlike sense of our utter weakness and ignorance, we seek to know Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, prepared, step by step, to follow His example, word by word to follow His teaching, and to embrace the blessed hope of everlasting life, that we shall have any real knowledge of Him, any real fellowship of the mysteries of His holy religion. It is much to be feared that many fancy they have more knowledge of Christ, and truer fellowship in His sufferings, than they really have. Because they are made scholars, as the phrase is, because they can read the gospel at home, because they often hear it read or preached at church, can read chapters and hear sermons, they think they know Christ. All

this, however, they may do without really knowing Him, or having any part or lot in the great salvation He hath wrought for us.

How little learning or scholarship had to do with knowing Christ St. Paul shews us, when he says "that not many wise men after the flesh were called" at first to be Christians, but that Almighty God "chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."

How little eloquent or fine preaching had to do with knowing Christ he shews us, when he tells the Corinthians "that he came to them not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to them the testimony of God," for that he had determined to know nothing among them, but "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." To know Him, and the fellowship of His sufferings,—to know Him and Him crucified, was the only knowledge he cared for for his own sake, and for the sake of those amongst whom he laboured. If we were to speak ever so well, and help to teach you other things ever so well, yet should fail ourselves to attain this knowledge, and to communicate this knowledge to you, we should be but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal: we should be blind leaders of the blind.

Now there may be very many sad reasons why we fail of attaining this knowledge through our own fault; but I believe one great reason why many, who would desire to attain it, who come to church and sing the psalms, and hear the lessons read and sermons preached, and who read chapters or hear their children read at home, is this, that they have never been taught, and so never have learned, to meditate. They get into a habit of hearing, and a custom of reading, without really understanding what they hear or read. As the Collect implies, which we all know so well, they hear without attending, read without marking, mark perhaps without learning, and learn perhaps by heart without inwardly digesting, and thus it comes to pass that they do not heartily embrace, still less do they firmly hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thus is Almighty God's complaint of His people of old true of ourselves: "Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider:" and meditation has been called with sad truth, "an unaccustomed and unpractised duty" among us; for if a duty, why unaccustomed and unpractised, why neglected and forgotten? To speak, and to hear, and to read so much as we all do of the

Gospel, and yet to have so very little of the "mind which was in Christ Jesus" as mentioned in the Epistle, and exemplified in the Gospels of this awful week, must be a very serious thing. To hear so much about Him and to know so little of Him in any practical and saving way must be full of danger to us all. Nay, it was the very snare and danger of the Jews themselves, who with all their fancied reverence for Abraham, their fancied knowledge of the law, and zeal for the writings of the prophets, when He came of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, knew Him not. There is a deep and sorrowful import in the words of St. Paul in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, "They of Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voice of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him." Of course there were deeper evils at the root of those prejudices which blinded them to Christ when He came than mere inattention to the voices of the prophets, but the whole history of them, as shewn us in the New Testament more especially, is a most fearful warning to all Christians who in any age or country "content themselves with mere shadows of religion, without endeavouring

after that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." They who delivered Christ to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify, were frequenters of the temple, and teachers in the synagogue, and expounders of the law, and disputers about doctrine, but in all this were hypocrites, or self-deceivers, professing to know God and in their works denying Him, drawing near to Him with their lips when their hearts were far from Him. A fearful warning are they to us to realize as best we may all we hear and read, and yet more, all we say and sing; to seek for spiritual understanding and practical knowledge, to know Him in spirit and in truth, lest we involve ourselves in a guilt like theirs. We may crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. We may do despite to the Spirit of grace by whom He is revealed to us in the outward word through the inspired writers, and by whom alone the knowledge of Him can be written, and His image traced on the fleshy tablets of the heart. After all Christ has done and suffered to teach and to save us, we may fail of knowing Him, and having any fellowship in His sufferings. If we would not so fail, we must seek to read the history of His life and sufferings with the spirit of

Christ, we must approach the Scriptures which testify of Him, with profound humility, and dwell on them with reverent meditation.

The evangelists in their plain and simple narratives leave us to trace in their impressive simplicity, the more impressive from their simplicity, what the real character of Christ crucified is: to see a majesty and a beauty, which the world cannot see nor the natural man understand, in every stage of His humiliation, from the cradle at Bethlehem to the cross on mount Calvary, and most of all in the last steps of the way of sorrows. Such is the image we are to mark feature by feature in the gospels, and which we must pray that the Spirit of Christ may trace by degrees upon the heart. It is in proportion to the preparation and the cleanness of the heart, that the several characters reflected on it will be distinct and vivid, or faint and dull; as it is enlarged or narrowed, they will be more or fewer in number; but if any thing will prepare, and cleanse, and enlarge the heart to receive these divine impressions of Christ crucified, and to know and feel "how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty," it must be meditation.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

TRUTH REALIZED BY MEDITATION.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10. *That I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings.*

It is to little purpose that Christ crucified is set forth in country after country, place after place, in the services of this awful season, if the scene be not every where realized. The Son of Man was not lifted up to be a mere spectacle to the world, but to draw all men unto Him; to be the sole object of the lively faith, and earnest hope, and adoring love of the Christian.

From the time when the inspired histories of it were written, it is full of interest to trace the vividness with which they were realized. In the very earliest times, doubtless, when, as has been said, "The blood of Christ was yet warm in the breasts of Christians," the history of the Passion was most precious. Imagine what the narrative of the "Agony and Bloody Sweat, the Cross and Passion, the precious Death and Burial," must

have been to the primitive martyrs and to Christians throughout the days of martyrdom. But even as time went on and the Church grew, and the gospels were to be read to successive generations, in more and more distant ages, and in more and more distant countries, it is quite remarkable with what freshness and vigour of faith Christians were still able at the mere reading of the gospels at this season to throw themselves back through ages to Calvary, as if they had been present as spectators of the scene. The gospel narrative is again and again spoken of after reading it in the public service, as being so clear, and plain, and distinct, that to devout and tender hearts the hearing what was read was the same as seeing what was done : as if it were not a past event commemorated, but a present transaction witnessed ; as if the whole picture of the things done for our salvation was so vivid, as that whatever at the time had wrung the hearts of the disciples ought to touch our affections now, and become so fixed in the breast that reading is seeing ; for that “ what they saw we have seen, what they learned we have learned, what they handled we have touched.” This way of speaking at about four hundred years from the time of our Lord’s Passion, and so about four-

teen hundred years from the time in which we live, will shew you the vigour and freshness with which the history was felt when read in this holy week; and so is of vast importance to us. But together with it we learn another lesson. What is the secret of this freshness of feeling? Earnest and heartfelt are the warnings and exhortations to the hearers; to hear nothing with listlessness and indifference; to pray for spiritual understanding, that the written record may be brought home in all clearness to the mind; that all the energy of enlightened souls may rouse itself to seek for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, never content with merely knowing the order of the transactions, without also looking into the meaning of the loving-kindness bestowed upon us. Hearers are reminded that the fulness of understanding is promised to unfeigned faith, that they should be kindled at what they hear to a more fervent hope, and that receiving the things written, as written with the finger of God, without a cloud to obscure them, they should have all as clear before them as if they could apprehend them with the bodily eye and touch, and that thus human nature, coming to know her Author, and how greatly she has been beloved by Him, may love Him more and more.

Surely no language can tell us more plainly what the reading of gospels should be to us, and with what spirit we should hear and read them; that in the knowledge of Christ crucified, of God made man and crucified for us, we are to seek the knowledge of God and of ourselves; that if any where we can utter the deep prayer, "Lord, shew me what I am, shew me what Thou art," it must be at the foot of the cross; and that there we are to learn our great Christian lesson of deep penitence and humility, of unfeigned faith, of unfading hope, and unfailing love.

Expressions such as these breathe that "savour" of the knowledge of Christ which St. Paul speaks of as manifested in every place where he went, and that holy "unction" spoken of by St. John, by which the knowledge of Christ crucified, in its transmission to these latter ages, and its diffusion over the world, must be carried home in its power, its richness, and sweetness to the individual soul.

And now then that the Church calls us from the busy world day by day to hear the self-same lessons, let us endeavour to see how we may as truly realize them as they did, and learn the lesson they would teach us.

When the Church calls us from running to

and fro, to the foot of the cross, as it were, to hear these sacred histories, doubtless she would keep our thoughts from wandering, and fix them upon Christ. In a high and holy sense she would teach us the wise man's saying, how far "better is the sight of the eyes," fixed on their true object, "than the wandering of the desire," or, as it is in the margin, "the walking of the soul." She would bid us listen word by word with profound attention and reverence, and follow our Lord step by step with collected and adoring thought; and in proportion as the vision gradually opened on the soul, be sure it would be one in which "the eye would never be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing;" to which when once opened no one would bear to close them again.

In a word, we must learn to meditate. It is by meditation that these divine truths have ever been best and most truly realized. It is meditation on our own sinfulness and frailty that must prepare and cleanse the heart to receive the impression they were mercifully designed to make upon us, and meditation upon the several particulars will shew how we should pray that they may be written upon the heart, so as to influence the life and conduct.

Many cannot come to hear them at all. Many again do not come. Upon those who do come it may be feared they fail of their blessed effect for want of the power of meditation. And so these all-concerning histories are read over and over again with little profit, and no doubt from year to year bear little fruit.

I can even conceive that it is because some feel that they have not been edified, as they say, and so are disappointed, that they get indifferent about coming at all. It may be feared, however, that there may be a secret consciousness that our Lord's example and sufferings tell them a more unwelcome truth about themselves than they quite like to hear. And if so, meditating would only make the matter worse. Those who do not like to hear would still less like to meditate. It would only distress them more. Yet can any subject be of deeper personal and practical concern to every single Christian, than to know Christ and to study His example, and to measure all things,—his daily thoughts, and words, and actions, his habits, his temper, his whole life,—according to the pattern shewn him in mount Calvary?

As it is, very many spend their whole time in running away from themselves, and in shutting their eyes to their Saviour. We all know they

do, and so do they. If they did not they could not be as they are, restless; they would acquaint themselves with Him and be at peace. Were they conscious of His presence, did they feel His piercing look, and keep His holy example before them, there would be a silent secret check upon them in all they think, and say, and do, wherever they may be. They would make that use of the gospels which the Psalmist implies, when he says, "Thy words have I hid within my heart, that I should not sin against Thee." What they hear and read would by meditation be treasured up and hidden in the heart. In particular, the Passion of our Lord is that subject for meditation which more than any other might avail thus silently and secretly to change the whole character.

A great saint of old has compared meditations on the toils, and sorrows, and sufferings of Christ, to the bundle of myrrh mentioned in holy Scripture as laid up in the bosom. This may be as bitter as myrrh, full of many bitter thoughts about His bitter sufferings, and about our sins, those roots of bitterness, which caused them. It may cause a great deal of shame and a great deal of pain; but it may be blessed to us, as it was to him. From his first conversion, he tells us, he spent his time in gathering piecemeal this bundle

of myrrh, and hiding it in his bosom. One by one he traced our Lord's steps, and watched His actions, and realized His looks, and meditated on His words, and specially dwelt on what he calls the "sorrows" and "bitternesses" of his Lord. First, the needs of His infancy, born into the world as an outcast, without a place to lay His head; then His labours in preaching; His weariness in wandering from place to place, in going about doing good; His night-watchings, when He continued all night in prayer to God; His fasting and temptation; the tears He shed in His tenderness and compassion; the snares laid to entangle Him in His talk; lastly, the perils He underwent among false brethren; the insults, the buffetings, the spittings, the reproaches, and the gnashing of teeth, and the nails and the spear. All these were so many separate parts or ingredients in the bundle of myrrh, which he laid up in his bosom; and he closes all with the mention of the myrrh which was offered to our Lord on the cross, and of the myrrh with which He was embalmed in the sepulchre. "In the first of which," he adds, "my Lord hath applied to Himself the bitterness of my sin, in the other hath hallowed the corruption of my body."

This will enable you to see what I mean by

meditation. It is to take a single point at a time, and to pause, and dwell upon it, with a sincere intention and silent prayer, to turn it to account in heavenly knowledge or holy practice. Think of this, you who can read, if you have hitherto thought reading enough, for it will teach you how much you have yet to learn. Think of this, you who cannot read, because if you are once put in the way of it, you, of all others, can learn to meditate. For when I speak of meditation, I am not about to give that full and exact account of it which has made it a sort of science of saints, but that which seems necessary for all, to the learned and unlearned, to help them to hear and read to better advantage, by "marking" what they hear and read, and learning a lesson as they "mark," and "inwardly digesting" the lesson which they learn. For this familiar Collect thus understood will give you all, and all I suppose know it by heart, an admirable account of meditation. It might help many a simple and unlettered Christian to obtain that "unction" which may kindle the heart and enlighten the mind, to understand the great and deep things of God, and by degrees purify and elevate the soul to know Him.

It is the character of Isaac that "he went out

into the field at eventide to meditate." It is said of the blessed Virgin Mary, that "she kept all these things and pondered them in her heart;" this was meditation. The Psalms are full of meditation; they begin with declaring him blessed who meditates in God's law day and night. The Psalmist implies that meditation is a safeguard against the first steps and gradual advances into sin, and it is certain that every step into sin hinders and thwarts meditation. He tells us it is the great secret of his knowledge: "I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation." We find him meditating before the night watches, and through the silent night, and before sunrise in the early dawn, with his eyes sometimes fixed on the starry firmament, and considering the boundless universe, and then turning inward and reflecting upon that mightiest mystery, that wonderful world, himself: "When I consider Thy heavens, even the works of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" The sunrise awakens his meditation to the brightness and purity of God's law, and the searching light it sheds upon every spot in the soul. "Who can

tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer."

Again, how touching are the penitential psalms, as meditations upon sin, and sorrow, and suffering, as felt in the depths, as God would have us feel it, and providing us with inspired expressions of those groanings which cannot be uttered; and how deeply affecting the musings of the Psalmist on the vanity of all things, on human frailty, on the shortness of life, and on death! Of these mysteries it is that he says especially, "My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and my heart shall muse of understanding; I will open my mouth in a parable, and shew my dark speech upon the harp." And again, "My heart was hot within me, and while I was thus musing the fire kindled, and at the last I spake with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end." Yes, and truly would the "fire kindle," would you carry these meditations to the Cross. They indeed will help you not only to the use of meditation, but especially of meditation on the Cross of Christ. They are upon the deepest realities we can possibly think of; on the greatness, and holiness,

and justice, and mercy, and power of Almighty God ; on human nature, once upright, now fallen, on the sin, and sorrow, and suffering, and mortality of man. The Cross of Christ alone throws light on them. It shews you those characters of God Himself. It shews you the preciousness of man in His sight amidst all his ruin and misery. It throws a fearful light on sin by the tremendous Sacrifice provided. It alone sheds balm on sorrow of soul and suffering of body, and alone has a remedy for the sting of death.

So learn by meditation to realize the overwhelming scene of Christ crucified. If by God's grace and mercy one single soul could be brought to fix its gaze steadily on the whole spectacle, or one portion of it, or one single point in it, during this season of its commemoration ; one conscience startled to ask what sin must be if this be the only satisfaction to God's justice ; one heart awakened to a sense of the unspeakable mercy shewn in it ; one step guided in the way of Christ's all holy example, so far would there be an advance towards a true knowledge of Him, and of the fellowship of His sufferings.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

FELLOWSHIP MAINTAINED BY MEDITATION.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10. *That I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings.*

WONDERFULLY was St. Paul called at his conversion to know Christ, and called from that moment to the fellowship of His sufferings. From the moment he cried, "Who art Thou, Lord?" in the light which struck him to the earth, and heard from heaven the awful voice, "I am Jesus," he was shewn how great things he must suffer for Christ's sake, and had to fill up what was behind of the afflictions of Christ. It was by the power of His Resurrection that he was brought to this knowledge at his conversion, and ever afterwards the same power, shewn in abundant gifts of the Spirit, enlarged and deepened that knowledge, so that his whole life and apostleship was only one continually increasing acquaintance with the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and more and more perfect conformity with His death. Hence perhaps the order of the

words of which the text is a part ; and in which he compares the nothingness of all other knowledge with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. “ That I may know Him and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” This was his whole desire on his own behalf and on behalf of those among whom he laboured. “ I have determined,” he says, “ to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” So entirely was this the secret of his inmost life, and the burthen of his teaching,—so entirely wrought into his soul was this one image, that when the mouth spoke out of the abundance of the heart it shone out ; he reflected it, so to say, in all his teaching, so that he told the Galatians that it was as if Jesus Christ had been actually crucified amongst them. “ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified amongst you ?”

Now, however high and out of reach this example be, these words, which state the fact that Christ crucified was so distinctly set before them that they might be said to have seen Him,—as if He had been crucified, not on Mount Calvary,

but there in Galatia,—express the very need which would ever be felt in all ages and countries where the Gospel would be preached, till the end of time, that of having the life and passion of our blessed Saviour set forth and kept before the eyes of Christians as an ever-living and present reality; and however we may learn our lesson from these words, they bring before us something far beyond our common notions about Scripture teaching and Scripture reading. St. Paul did not set forth this living image of Christ by worldly wisdom, nor did they before whose eyes it was set forth see it to any saving purpose by any human learning. He set Him forth in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; they saw and knew Him as Christian disciples; God blessed his setting forth of Christ crucified, and opened their eyes to see and hearts to understand.

Can it be said of us, in this distant age and distant country, so fallen as we are from Christ in doctrine and practice, as it was said of them, that before our eyes Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified amongst us? I fear it cannot. We ministers of Christ bear not about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, nor live as if the world was crucified to us, and we to the world; nor bear in the body nor stamped upon

the soul the marks of the Lord Jesus. Nor have you, though taught to read and brought to church, seen the Son of Man lifted up in such wise as to feel deeply and really drawn towards Him as you would wish, your whole soul and spirit drawn to Him, and your inward eye fixed upon Him.

This may be owing to many sins and negligences and ignorances both in ourselves and those who have gone before us, which we shall do well to lay to heart at the foot of the cross at this solemn season. But I have been mentioning one great want, which may account for our dryness and coldness in the knowledge and service of Christ. There has been a want of meditation, of attentive, patient, quiet, thoughtful meditation. People hear the Gospel read at church, they are taught to read the Gospel at home, nay, many are taught to study the Gospel, but few, indeed scarcely any amongst us have been taught or have known at all properly to meditate. It has been called, I have said, an "unaccustomed" and "unpractised duty." Yet a duty it is, a duty in us for our own sake and for yours. If the priest's lips are to keep knowledge, and the people are to seek for the law at his mouth; he must seek that knowledge from the fountain

head. Many of us who in these busy days are, like Martha, "cumbered with much serving," have great need for far more time and opportunity to "sit at Jesus' feet and hear His Word." And we shall teach and preach to little purpose, whether here at church or from house to house, unless we bring you in a measure to understand what it is to meditate.

It is said indeed that he "who has learned how rightly to pray, has got the secret of a holy life;" but it may be feared that he has done but little towards learning how to pray, who has never meditated. For as prayer is the secret of a holy life, so is meditation the secret of an effectual fervent prayer, and nothing will do so much to collect wandering thoughts at church and to secure devout prayers at home as meditation.

Many persons, I believe, when they come into church and kneel down are in the habit of repeating to themselves the words of the Psalmist: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer!" The meditation may be called the soul or spirit of the words, the words without them will be a dead and lifeless form.

It is from want of something like a habit or practice of meditation that the daily service probably has seemed to so many a formal service. It is only, as it is understood how God's heavenly "doctrine," as Moses speaks, "drops day by day as the rain, and His speech distils as the dew, as the small rain on the tender herb and on the grass," on hearts prepared to receive it, that hearts are gradually softened and quickened and grow in grace.

There is nothing which may so prepare hearts to receive and communicate vivid and deep and lasting impressions of divine truth as meditation. So far as we know not what it is to meditate, we know not one of the chief ways to enlarge and cleanse the heart, and one of the principal means of attaining to the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, and of the fellowship of His sufferings.

Why was the whole history of our Lord's life and passion written at such length and such very great distinctness, in such very minute particulars? and in the several particulars of His sufferings with the greatest minuteness of all? St. John tells us in words which we can scarcely lay sufficiently to heart. It was that we might have fellowship with the apostles and disciples them-

selves, in the same truths of which they were the eye-witnesses. That we, i. e. all those who not having seen would seek the blessing of believers, might see Christ with the spiritual eye as they saw Him with the eye of the body. And forasmuch as after His Resurrection they began to see Him with somewhat other eyes, when He sometimes conversed with them visibly, and sometimes became invisible, and unfolded to them in the Scriptures the things concerning Himself; and after His Ascension through the descent of the Holy Spirit, shed a still brighter light upon the law and the prophets; surely the word "fellowship" must have very real and deep and important force. It would seem as if, writing, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the things which some of them had seen, but which after our Lord's Ascension were only meditated upon with burning hearts in remembrance, they felt that those to whom they wrote might through the same Spirit abiding with the Church see and feed upon the same divine truths. Their fellowship with Christ and the Father was through the Spirit, and the fellowship of all Christians in the knowledge of Christ with them, would be a fellowship through the Spirit too.

Hear the glowing words of the beloved disciple,

who so well knew Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings; who was most alive to the glory and grace and truth which shone in his Lord during the days of His Flesh, who lay on His breast at supper-time, who was with Him in His agony, who followed Him to the foot of the cross, who heard the seven last words and saw the varied expressions of countenance with which we must conceive those most precious of all words were uttered, who saw the head bowed, and the side pierced, and the water and blood,—saw, and bare record, that we might believe. Hear, I say, the glowing words of St. John, who speaks as if words failed him to express the vividness with which he remembered the very aspect, and expression, and voice of His divine Lord and Master; “that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, which our hands have handled of the Word of Life, (for the Life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us,) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us.”

Fellowship with him indeed, so near and dear to Christ, in the contemplation with which he

beheld that awful countenance we may not speak of, but fellowship in the same faith and the same spirit, we may trust we have not so lost by our sins and negligences, but that by reverent meditation on our Lord's sufferings, and penitential prayer for His Spirit, we may cleanse our hearts to receive such knowledge of Himself as He may vouchsafe to give us, as we count with attention, and affection, and application, His steps to the cross. Let us stand at a distance, as unworthy to touch the hem of His garment, and go on from humble beginnings and slow degrees, as less than the least of all these unspeakable mercies, to learn of Him the lessons He would teach us, of lowliness, and patience, and charity. Without meditation we shall not see Him to any purpose, though evidently set forth, crucified among us, during these high and holy days; we shall only "hear of Him with the ear." By its aid, hearing His word as at the foot of the cross in His own house, "our eyes may begin to see Him," and learn at the sight to say with Job, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Lent and Passion-tide will thus, by His mercy, have done their work.

But now, in saying all this, my brethren, am I speaking most to your understanding or your

heart? I would fain believe that in speaking to you as Christians I am speaking to a spirit within you, however latent, more excellent than either, to what St. Paul calls, spiritual understanding, to some power of spiritual discernment, which meditation may help to awaken, and prayer to increase, which will enable you to see the divine truths which the Gospels teach, the simple lessons of practical holiness, and the deep mysteries of Christian faith.

So now as I have said, the words of our familiar Collect are really a good help to understand what meditation is. As reading and hearing without marking, and marking without learning, and learning without digesting, are so many ways of expressing the want of meditation; and as marking, and learning, and digesting what we hear and read, will be found to express, sufficiently for all practical purposes, what meditation is, I will apply what I have said in such a way as may help you to obtain that knowledge of your Saviour, and fellowship in His sufferings, which may avail to your guidance in life, and comfort in death, and blessedness in eternity.

To mark properly, you will need attention. To learn well, you will need affection; for no one will learn well what he has no heart in: and to

digest what you mark and learn, you will need reflection. But bear in mind that in every action of our Lord, in every suffering, in every word, in every gesture, in every look, there is something to arrest attention, to engage affection, to call for reflection; and though the whole will be a life-long study, you will be surprised to think how much you may learn, by way of beginning, by taking only one or two particulars.

Mark then only one point, our Lord's "*look*." "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Peter was in the darkness at the lower end of the high priest's hall, his face "towards the fire," as if the fire-light was the only light upon him, when the cock crew while he was in the very act of denying his Master, and the eye ten thousand times brighter than the sun fell upon him, pierced him, searched him,—it was the eye of the Judge giving him self-knowledge, the eye of the Saviour giving tears of penitence. First, mark then, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Next, learn the lesson. Does any one say, the darkness shall cover me? Then shall his night be turned into day. Out of God's sight he cannot be, for "the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good." Let the thought of that all-searching, yet most merciful look, engage the

affection to say only, Thou, Lord, seest me, Thou hast shewn me by Thy sufferings, that Thou lovest me: look upon me, make me to know myself in the light of Thy countenance! make me to know Thee amid floods of penitential tears! Lastly, digest the wonderful lesson of our Lord's look. Reflect upon the look, which He turned upon Peter. Did Peter ever, suppose you, forget it? It is said that he shed tears whenever the cock crew. However, as it was ever felt in the heart it so wonderfully searched, so, looking backward on the past and onward to the future, and all around you and within you, pray that on all whose hearts have been turned away from Him, His look may be turned, that searching, converting, restoring look; pray, that once turned upon you it may teach you to walk in the light, and lay to heart the promise to the penitent, "I will inform thee and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go, and I will guide thee with Mine eye."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER.

THE SOUL PURIFIED BY MEDITATION.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10. *That I may know Him, . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings.*

MANY Christians think they know Christ, who in any practical and saving sense know Him not at all. Many think they know the fellowship of His sufferings, who know little more than that He suffered for them. The word "knowledge," however, has a very deep and full meaning; and the word fellowship a very real and sacred meaning also; and the life and sufferings of God made man, would not have been related at so great length and in such minute particulars, if the knowledge of Him were to be no more than a mere notion in the head, and the fellowship of His sufferings no more than a mere word on the tongue. So many in these days read of Him in

the Gospels with the outward eye, and hear of Him with the outward ear, that we are most especially concerned to enquire how that deeper knowledge and nearer fellowship spoken of by St. Paul may be promoted.

Now really to acquaint ourselves with Him, without that irreverent familiarity with which some read His Word, and those sentiments of mere earthly tenderness with which some call upon His Name; to feel that in every page we keep meeting One who knows us better than we know ourselves, and who shews us that He would have us also know Him; this is the work of thoughtful meditation. How often might He seem to say to those who have from childhood known more or less of the Scriptures, what He once said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" In truth, to realize His most sacred presence as we commune with Him in His Word; to bring His searching eye on our daily life and conduct; to recognise His voice; to observe His actions and gestures; to follow His steps, especially along the path of suffering; all these things form a life-long lesson, and may well call forth all the faculties of the wonderful soul which He has given us.

I said, when I bade you meditate, Did I speak more to the head or to the heart? Perhaps it was to a more excellent spirit in the Christian, which will engage both head and heart in the work.

But now, that you may know something of the depth and greatness of the subject, and how very little mere hearing, and reading, and scholarship, can have to do with the true knowledge of Christ; I will mention some powers of the soul which are not so hard to be understood, but that the unlearned may understand them. Fearfully indeed and wonderfully are we made. Fearful and wonderful are those powers of the soul which we so often use without reflection, and so often abuse, but which must all, more or less, be brought to bear on the true knowledge of Christ.

Think what He has given us, and what amidst the wreck and ruin within us we can trace as His gift; a will wherewith we ought to serve Him, a heart wherewith we ought to love Him, a conscience which once governed the affections and the will, and which now stings and troubles us, when we fail to love and serve Him; a mind to understand when He speaks, both without and within; a memory to look backward and retrace all we have done in departing from Him, and to

treasure up all He has done to bring us back to Himself; and hope or forecast to look forward and conjecture what it may be to see Him, to meet Him eye to eye; and, besides all, imagination, a power as quick as thought, which sets before us, before our mind's eye, as in a moment, all that we hear or read of; yes, and yet more, the power of reflecting upon all we know or feel or imagine, and upon the very faculties themselves which we so employ.

A little meditation upon these wonderful powers will soon tell us how they may severally be secretly at work in every one of us more or less, hindering or helping on our knowledge of Christ. We may have a will to serve Him, yet something secretly drawing us back; a heart to love Him, yet misplaced on something else; a conscience which tells us that we neither serve Him nor love Him as we ought; memory which reckons up so many sins, and negligences, and ignorances through our past lives, that it may well make us afraid to look forward to see Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Yes, and all this, a depraved will, a laggard heart, a burthened conscience, and a defiled memory, will make us almost unconsciously to ourselves afraid to realize the strange mysterious

scenes set before us in the Gospels, afraid to look for Christ's presence, afraid to listen for His voice, afraid to watch for His eye, and so altogether afraid to meditate upon His life and sufferings, as a servant will keep out of sight of a master whom he is conscious he has disobeyed. The busy lively imagination itself will shrink from realizing what it may find too real.

For there is this vast unspeakable difference between realizing to ourselves, and imagining, and reflecting upon the truths of the Gospel, and all other truths, that they most nearly concern our immortal souls, and will concern us through all eternity.

Christ, whom we see at this season betrayed by one disciple, forsaken by all, and in His deep humiliation seized by one ruffian, scourged by another, blindfolded and buffeted, and spitted on, His visage more marred than any man, and His form more than the sons of men, whom we have seen hurried from one judgment-seat to another, from one scene of insult to another, He is none other than the God who made us. He will be judge of those unrighteous judges who so judged Him. The countenance of Christ, however it may appear to us, however at one time meek and lowly, at another awful and ma-

jestic; however sometimes fairer than the children of men, yet in these His bitter sorrows and sufferings, shorn of its radiance, and without form or comeliness, this is the countenance of Him who shall come to be our judge, of the Son of Man whom we shall see coming in the clouds of heaven.

As surely as He hung in the darkness at mid-day on the cross, with the penitent thief on His right hand, and the impenitent thief on His left, and the people stood beholding, and the faithful few were gathered at His feet, and the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced," so truly is it said, "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." He shall, as He foretold in the temple on one of the first days of this awful week just before He suffered, He shall sit as a king upon the throne of His glory, with all nations gathered before Him, and shall separate the sheep from the goats. On the cross we see the head which shall then be turned towards the one, and away from the other.

Stretched on the cross we see the hands which shall set us severally on the right hand and on

the left. We stand at the feet of Him before whom we shall all then fall down.

Meditate upon this, my brethren, the last great scene to which conscience points, and memory points. Dare to meditate as Lent will have prepared you, on past sin and future judgment, and then you will be glad to dwell with a contrite heart, and a chastened imagination, and deep reflection, on all He has done through the mysteries of His holy Incarnation, to destroy the power, and to remove the penalty of sin, and to abate the terrors of that fearful judgment. Dare to meditate on His coming to judge the world, and you may venture to meditate on all that He did and suffered at His first coming to save it, and all He is yet doing by His almighty Spirit through the power of His resurrection to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. If the conscience of any one tells him as I speak, that his will is depraved, his heart laggard, his conscience itself burthened, his memory full of past sins and vain imaginations, and he feels as well he may, how truly all these things are lets and hindrances to his meditating on Christ, and make him shrink and flinch from desiring to know Him, let him ask himself, who shall correct his depraved will, and who quicken his laggard heart, and who cleanse

his defiled memory, or who give peace to his troubled conscience, and restore the whole soul, but He who says, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Let him not care to be a scholar, let him come as a sinner and open his grief, and pray that being cleansed from his sin, he may hearken as a disciple. So did Mary Magdalene. She first stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and washed His feet with tears, and wiped them with her hair. Then she sat at His feet and heard His words. And though in her great and good work in the house of Simon the leper she anointed or embalmed His head, we still find her at His feet at the foot of the cross; at His feet again also weeping at the closed mouth of the sepulchre; and as if about to clasp His feet after the resurrection: all so many proofs of penitent meditation, so many earnestness it may be of the gathering of penitents at His feet at the resurrection of the just.

Now of those who knew our Lord best and loved Him most, and had most true and near fellowship in His sufferings, how entirely meditation is a great feature in their characters. Of the Blessed Virgin it is said, Mary kept all these

things and pondered in her heart. Of St. John the beloved disciple, that he lay in our Lord's bosom. Of Mary Magdalene, that she sat at His feet and heard His word. And so step by step they followed Him, living and moving and having their being in Him, till they sympathized with Him, and as He was afflicted in all their afflictions, they were admitted to sacred and mysterious fellowship in His.

If by meditation we might approach to only a glimpse of real knowledge of Him, of His eternal Godhead, of His holiness and purity, His tenderness and affection, His mercy and pity and loving-kindness, how different would our lives and tempers be: could they be what they are if we had really meditated upon these things? O then let us learn to loathe ourselves in His sight, that we may love Him more. Let us wean ourselves from sin, that we may approach Him nearer; let us stand as lepers afar off, or press to touch only the hem of His garment, that so His touch unseen, His look, His will, virtue going out of Him, may cleanse us. And every thought of His majesty and holiness and tenderness, as it will tell us that, had we truly known Him, we never should have sinned against Him, so will say to us, as we begin to know Him, "Go, and sin no more."

Now then meditate as best you may on all you hear or read of in this holy season ; pray God to give you the hearing ear and seeing eye and understanding heart. Enter with Him as on this very evening into the guest-chamber where He kept the last Passover with His disciples. By His divine foreknowledge He knew all things ; He disposed all things. His eyes were upon all. He told Peter and John what they should find : a man having a pitcher of water, whom they were to follow where he went in. They found as He had said ; they found the large upper room He had told them of ; there they made ready. And when the even was come He sat down with the twelve. Then at supper time, the supper begun but not ended, He riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments, and took a towel and girded Himself. Then He poured the water in the basin and began to wash His disciples' feet.

Meditate upon these things, when the even is come. Think upon His sitting down with the twelve for the last time in this world, with the hand of the traitor with Him on the table. Then see Him rise from supper, girding Himself with the towel, pouring out the water, washing the disciples' feet, Judas' among the rest ! Again see Him taking up the bread and blessing and

breaking it; and the cup, and blessing it, and giving it to the disciples with the solemn words, "Take, eat: this is My Body. Drink ye all of this; this is My Blood." Think again of His commandment; "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. Hereby shall all men know ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Think of Judas going out from such a scene under cover of night to do his deed of darkness. Set all before you as best you may, and lay all to heart. Be sure the more real the history is to you, the more distinct and telling will be its deeper meaning. These things were not only for theirs but for your sakes. Here is His lesson of humility and purity and charity for His disciples in all ages.

When St. Peter, not knowing what He meant, could not bear that his Lord and Master should wash his feet, He said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Would He not say the same to us all one by one, were He to speak to us before our Easter communion? "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." And if we were to say what we ought to say, should we not be ready to cry out, one by one, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

He by His humility and love would teach us to humble ourselves to one another, and wash one another's feet, and love one another. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. So He seems to speak to us one by one, as He brings home His charge of purity, and to all together as He enjoins mutual humility and mutual love.

Yes, my brethren, and would you know His spotless innocence, the depth of His humility, the measure of His love? "Pass out, in meditation, from the Paschal supper to the brook Cedron. Meditation, it is well said, will tell the drops of sweat, and measure them, and find them as big as drops of blood. Then it stops to conjecture the greatness and number of our sins. It fears in the midst of Christ's agonies, it hears His groans. It spies Judas's lantern afar off. It follows Jesus to Gabbatha, and wonders at His innocence, and the malice of His enemies; and feels the strokes of the whip, and shrinks the head when the crown of thorns is thrust hard upon His holy brows, and at last goes step by step with Jesus, and carries part of the Cross, and there is nailed fast with sorrow and compassion, and dies with love."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

GOOD FRIDAY.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

HEBREWS xii. 2. *Looking unto Jesus.*

TO-DAY we have but one object before us: but that so awful and so wonderful that those who would most earnestly desire to regard it aright, will scarce know how to regard it. We are called to "look unto Jesus;" to look away, as the word means in the original, away from the world and the things of the world, to look away from ourselves, to look out of and beyond ourselves, and to look unto Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And wherever we turn we see scarcely any thing else; we see Him foreshewn in the types of the law, which fade away as we behold the reality; we see Him too in the Prophets; we hear Him speaking a thousand years beforehand in the Psalms, and lastly "we see Him, as it were, evidently set forth, crucified amongst

us," in the Gospel. Abraham in the book of Genesis, who saw His day near two thousand years beforehand; Moses, who near fifteen hundred years beforehand, counted the reproach of Christ greater treasure than the riches of Egypt; David, who a thousand years beforehand, uttered in the Spirit the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of David; Isaiah, who beyond all others is called the Gospel prophet, and drew, eight hundred years beforehand, the most exact portrait of the Man of Sorrows; all these in various ways seem to enforce upon us, in their fullest and deepest meaning, Pilate's unconscious words: "Behold the Man." Above all, the beloved disciple who saw these things, who followed our Lord through all the last scene of His earthly sufferings, who stood at the foot of the Cross, who saw his blessed Master brought as a lamb to the slaughter, who saw His hands and feet pierced, and the blood and water flow from the wound in His side, who received His last charge, who heard His last words, who saw Him pour out His soul unto death, and bow His head and yield up His spirit; he who saw all this, bare record that we might believe. Thus all with one voice call upon us to look unto Jesus.

When God's servants of old looked away,

looked out of and beyond this world of dreams and shadows for some better and more enduring substance, and obeyed in faith what God commanded, this was the prospect opened to them. They seem to have been favoured with glimpses beforehand of Him who was to come, who when He should have overcome the sharpness of death, should open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. So it was with Abraham ; he looked away from the world, he followed where God led, obeyed God's bidding, and so had the distant vision of Christ. Abraham saw His day, and he saw it and was glad. The Spirit which was within him witnessed perhaps the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Once we read that when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon him, and a horror of great darkness fell upon him. It might be that it was an earnest or an intimation of this dark day, in which the sun would go down at noon ; when the Sun of Righteousness should be hidden.

At all events, he who withheld not his son, his only son, from Almighty God, but so freely surrendered to Him all that was dearest to him on earth, might well seem a meet person to whom He should reveal the unspeakable mercy in store for mankind, when the Almighty Father Himself

should spare not His only-begotten Son but freely give Him up for us all. And so the saints of God have ever taught that as God the Father was about in the fulness of time to send His only Son to be the Saviour of the world, and the Son was as freely to offer Himself for us men and for our salvation, God foreshewed this two thousand years beforehand in this wonderful type. Thus we see in Abraham the most faithful follower of God, a shadow of God the Father: and in Isaac the most lively image of Christ. Touching as the history is in itself: Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son; and Isaac silently obeying his father's voice, and doing his father's will; we see greater things than these. Abraham called the name of the place where Isaac was to be sacrificed Jehovah Jireh, which means, "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." And so two thousand years after in the mount of the Lord it was seen: there on Mount Calvary was provided the great sacrifice of which this was a type and shadow. Though there is not one syllable all the Bible through to tell us so, yet the picture is so vivid that we cannot but say as we read of Isaac, a greater than Isaac is here. Can we help feeling that as we look at Isaac we are beholding the lively image of Jesus Christ.

He is the true Isaac, the true Lamb, whom God provided for a burnt offering. When we read this history a few weeks ago we saw the type. When we read it to-day we see only the reality. See how from the first the thoughts and words and actions of God's chosen servants have been made to look towards this wonderful and awful scene which we are beholding to-day: how in a measure they who received not the promises but beheld them afar off, saw Christ's day, and, as it were, "looked unto Jesus" beforehand: and even if they knew not what they did, or how great things they were witness to, yet we of these latter days may see in all some deep meaning, and learn to "look unto Jesus," in many things they said and did.

Again, from Abraham the friend of God, let us go on to David the man after God's own heart. Who can fail to see that in all the Psalms we here read to-day, a greater than David is speaking: David disappears: we are, in a word, "looking unto Jesus." All through the twenty-second Psalm, the first of our morning Psalms, He is speaking to us silently from the Cross; all through the eighty-eighth, with which we close the evening, He is speaking to us from the grave. The first words, "My God, My God,

why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He uttered aloud in the agonies of death, and all that follows was fulfilled to the letter: and we are led by those awful words to look at it in silence.

"All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God, that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, if He will have Him. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint: My heart also in the midst of My body is even like melting wax. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue cleaveth unto my gums: and Thou shalt bring Me into the dust of death. For many dogs are come about Me: and the council of the wicked layeth siege against Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I may tell all My bones: they stand staring and looking upon Me."

In these words, David anticipated one thousand years beforehand the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of David. In them Christ speaks from the Cross, to those who stood around, and in them to all those various tempers who in different ages stand like that mingled crowd, "beholding these things;" beholding the Son of Man lifted up as a gazing-stock, pouring forth His soul unto death, and calling to all the ends

of the world, to remember themselves and be turned unto Him, to look unto Him and be saved. It is an awful thought how many of those who stood by, knew it as by heart, and instead of being brought by it to "look unto Jesus," fulfilled it in reviling Him, and putting Him to death: instead of being brought to remember themselves, hardened their hearts yet more against all He had done for them.

But if the Scriptures of the Old Testament thus teach us to "look unto Jesus;" if in the act of Abraham, the friend of God; and in the words of David, "the man after God's own heart;" we see Christ crucified, and hear His words, how much more shall we be taught the same lesson in the narrative of him who was the eye-witness of all the truth, and saw the types and prophecies fulfilled, the disciple whom Jesus loved? From the time when he left his father and all that he had, till he saw his Master die, he never once looked back; he lay on His breast at supper; he who drew nearer the Cross than others, and so may best teach us what it is to "look unto Jesus."

And why was all this deep mystery so wonderfully foreshewn and foretold, and so punctually in God's time fulfilled, and so minutely recorded

for our instruction? Surely to shew to those who had eyes to see, each in his measure as he was able to bear it, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, to teach good and holy men of old to "look unto Jesus." And why revealed to those, but to teach us what manner of men we should be, if we would have the mystery of the Cross revealed to us, and duly understand their words, and contemplate aright the great object this day before us? We should imitate the self-denying obedience of faithful Abraham, the loyal heart of penitent David, if we would understand aright the mystery they pointed to: we should seek for the pure heart of the beloved disciple, or the penitent heart of Mary Magdalene, if we would stand with them and our Lord's Virgin Mother at the foot of the Cross. The mystery of the Cross must be learned under the Cross, says a holy man, and it is only in proportion as we look away from the world and from ourselves, and take up our crosses daily, and bear them after Jesus, that we shall ever know the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His death, and be able in any true and saving way to look unto Jesus.

It is one thing to look at Him, another to look unto Him. One thing to go over the whole scene

of the Crucifixion with the mind's eye, and another to read it with the inward eye of the heart. The soldiers who stripped and crucified Him, sat down and watched Him; they gazed on the agonies of the sufferer. The people at a distance stood beholding, gazing at Him from the distance; these were near His Cross without being near Him; they were looking at Him, without looking unto Him. Many of those who came together at that sight, smote their breasts and returned: they were much more nearly looking unto Jesus, when their eyes shrunk and turned away from the sight, than those who could stand looking and remain unmoved: of those who beheld Him, who saw His dying countenance and heard His dying voice, two were brought to confess Him: the penitent thief who hung at His side; and the centurion who stood near and said, as He cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost, "Truly this was the Son of God." The penitent thief was brought from only looking at Jesus at first, at last truly to look unto Him; and to say, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Now all we who are here met to-day, are called to turn aside to see this great and awful

sight, to look away from the world, and to look for one or two short hours at the one only object before us all, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

How different would life be, how different would death be to all, how different would the world be, could we learn to measure it by the Cross of Christ! Could the rich dare be self-indulgent, or the poor murmur at his hard lot, or any living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins, if he could once be brought to see the sufferings of the Son of God; of Him who suffered for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God? Could any man wantonly sin, who should think what sin must be in Almighty God's sight, and how unspeakably terrible its consequences in the eternal world, if it called for such a sacrifice as this? Could any be angry at insult, or passionate at rebuke, or impatient under injury, who remembered the Cross of Christ? Could any be distressed at the loss of the world's goods, who should remember Him who had not where to lay His head, and died naked on the Cross? Could any reckon on a quiet life and an easy death, who should have followed Christ at this season through a life of weariness and painful-

ness, till He closes it by a death of shame and suffering? More than all, could Christians, who pray this day as one family, for whom Christ was contented to be betrayed, and to suffer death upon the Cross, be so alienated heart from heart as they are, did they look in earnest unto Jesus and His Cross?—It was His own prophecy, that if He were lifted up He would draw all men unto Him: as David in the Passion Psalm had said: “All the ends of the world shall remember themselves and be turned to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him.” It is because men have turned away from the Cross, that they have turned away in self-will and selfishness from each other. He died to gather together into one the children of God which were scattered abroad, to bind them together in one Body, by one Spirit: and if in any one thing more than another we crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame, it is by dividing His coat without seam: by rending His Body the Church. Be sure, in proportion as we can be brought in earnest to look unto Jesus, and learn the mystery of His Cross, we shall learn one great lesson of love. Those who are estranged one from another, often are reconciled at the death-bed of

a dear friend, and are glad to bury their hard feelings in his grave. Would that those who are everywhere turned towards the Lord on this day, might so lay to heart His precious death and burial, that they might forget in Him all their variance and strife, and cast down their self-will at the foot of His Cross, and lay their enmities in His grave! It is the beloved disciple's own lesson on the death of Christ: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

God grant us all and each to lay to heart these things, to look betimes unto Him whom we are piercing by our divisions, and crucifying afresh by our sins! May He pour upon the Church the spirit of grace and supplications, grace to draw them to Him, and prayer to unite their hearts to Him and to each other; so that those who by their sins and divisions are turned from Christ, shall look on Him whom they pierced, before He shall come in clouds to judgment; and Christians be once more of one heart and one soul, one fold under One Shepherd.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

EASTER EVE.

BURIED WITH CHRIST.

I THESS. v. 10. *Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.*

It is a strange mysterious contrast to pass in meditation from the awful darkness of Good Friday to the soothing twilight of Easter Eve; from the wild and frantic tumult of the Crucifixion, to the tranquil stillness of the tomb; from the busy crowds who thronged with such varied feelings and varied expressions of countenance round the cross, to the little band of mourners who laid our Lord's Body in the sepulchre; from a scene where almost every passion seemed excited, to one where all concerned are simply mourners, in silent wonder and silent sorrow. Yes, and mysterious is the contrast between Christ on the cross and Christ in the sepulchre, between "looking unto Jesus," enduring the cross in agony of body, and pouring forth His

soul with majestic calmness unto death, and now following the Holy One, in His separation of soul and body, through the grave and gate of death;—the body which could know no corruption swathed as if for its last resting-place: the soul which no pains of death could hold, nor powers of hell retain, passed into Paradise, and opening its closed gates to the penitent thief.

Full of overwhelming tenderness and unspeakable mystery, is every meditation on this day; the crown of thorns removed, the napkin in its stead, the countenance yesterday apparently changing with the unutterable meanings conveyed through the seven last words, now seen under its last sad change; then calm and majestic and resigned in suffering, now placid in death.

As yesterday then, we were “looking unto Jesus,” who died for us: so to-day we may go on with St. Paul to say, “who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, live or die, we should live together with Him.”

As our Lord and Saviour yesterday in the Psalms spoke to us, as it were from the cross, so did He from the sepulchre.

“Free among the dead, like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave, who are out of remembrance, and are cut away from Thy

hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in the place of darkness, and in the deep: I am so fast in prison that I cannot get forth. My lovers and friends hast Thou put away from me, and hid mine acquaintance out of my sight."

This was our closing Psalm yesterday afternoon. When the even was come, i. e., the hour between three o'clock and sunset, came Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, two disciples, hitherto secret or hidden ones, who at this hour when others had forsaken Him, came forward to do the last office, as we say. Joseph went in boldly unto Pilate and begged the Body of Jesus, and having received and taken it down from the cross, and purchased fine linen, swathed, or, as we should say, shrouded it. Nicodemus, who shared with him in the pious deed, brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes to embalm it; swathed in death as He had been at His birth, when the wise men foreshewed His burial by their offering of myrrh. And then both together they wound it in linen clothes with the spices. The head was bound about with a napkin, the body bound, like Lazarus, hand and foot with grave clothes. The inner clothes with which it was swathed apparently, and next the Blessed Body itself, were a sort of lawn or fine

linen; the outer a sort of coarser cere-cloth to enwrap the spices. "Near to the place where He was crucified was a garden, and in that garden a sepulchre, hewn out of a rock wherein never man before was laid. Thither the two disciples bore the Holy One, and there they laid Him. Joseph rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. The two Maries, Mary the wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene, and perhaps a few more of the faithful women, seem to have been the only train who followed. These two came and beheld the sepulchre, and how the body was laid. We see them sitting over against the mouth of it. Mary Magdalene, as on all other occasions, yet again at the feet of Jesus. They returned and prepared spices and ointments, but night overtook them, and they rested the Sabbath day according to the Commandment.

I know no day so full of most awful, and yet most tender thoughts, as this Easter Eve, yet I fear it passes more disregarded than almost any other. Good-Friday, with its darkness, indeed, is by some so meditated upon that it casts its dark shade over all Fridays in the year; Easter Sunday sheds its bright and holy light on all Sundays in the year, the sun as it

were of them all. It were much to be wished that Easter Eve, or holy Saturday could be so meditated upon that it should shed, what may perhaps be called a sober, solemn twilight over all our Saturdays. For indeed I think that the feelings with which we should regard this mysterious day, are of that kind which might be represented by what we call dusk, or evening twilight, when we can no longer see the features of men and the shapes of things, and we seem to see all things as through a glass darkly, and as enveloped in mystery.

Are not all our thoughts about death and the grave, and the decay of these mortal bodies, and of the unseen state of the disembodied immortal souls, our thoughts of those who have passed away from our sight, our own prospects of that realm beyond the grave, dim and dreamy, and indistinct and overwhelming, such as we are unable to realize.

There is but One who says "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of hell and of death." He knows what it is to die, to be dead, and buried; what it must be to every one of us to die: He tasted of death for every man. And on Him must we repose all our deep

unutterable thoughts about what it is to die, and go we know not where.

Of one thing indeed this most blessed day gives us great assurance, that whatever death is, it is not the same to those who are His, who are in Him, as it was before He underwent it: whatever the grave may be, it is not the same place to Christians as it was before God's Holy One, Christ's Body, was laid in the sepulchre, and saw no corruption: whatever the world of spirits is, it is not the same as it was before His Soul was present there.

In death, when His Body was in the grave, and His Soul in the state of separation, neither Body nor Soul were separated from His Godhead. His Body was the Body of God Incarnate, His Soul the Soul of God Incarnate. And when on Easter morning He arose again and re-united them, it was to be for ever a quickening Spirit to communicate life to His members; to souls and bodies united in life, and disunited in death, but waiting in their secret resting-places that time when He shall again re-unite them—souls of the righteous in His hand, their bodies like His the care of His good angels. Buried with Him in baptism they are made His; by daily mortification they should be preserved as His;

when they are separated they are not separated from Him; who to this end died and rose and revived that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

My brethren, if we thought more on this, on what and whose these souls and bodies of ours so fearfully and wonderfully made, are, both in life and death, how different would be our lives and our deaths, our treatment of them in life and death.

We should ever remember why Christ died and was buried; that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him; we should remember what that life is, a hidden life, "Ye are dead," says St. Paul, "and your life is hid with Christ in God;" it should be the life of men meditating in secret, communing with Him in secret, having our prayers, and alms, and devotions in secret: closing every day with the thought of Christ's death and burial described in those words of the Psalmist, "I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is Thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety;" till at length, thus dying daily to the world, and living hidden lives in Him, we might learn the secret of those deep words so familiar to us, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow

of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

We should, any of us, be glad to have these words our own. But if we would have Him with us in death, we must set Him always before us in life; He will not be with us, if we be not with Him, in life or in death. Let us cherish these thoughts, for surely we would have our Lord and Saviour with us in suffering, and in sorrow, and in death. A blessed consolation is it that no suffering of body, no sorrow of soul, no not death itself, is unknown to Him. And so let us close with thankfulness our meditations on this wonderful week: brought nearer, we may trust, to Him who suffered as never man suffered, and died as never man died, as that we may know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings, in crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, in mortifying the deeds of the body, in doing at whatever cost whatsoever He commands, in bearing whatsoever He is pleased to lay upon us; and resign our souls in life and in death into His hands, if by any means we may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

EASTER DAY.

EASTER JOY.

ST. LUKE xxiv. 34. *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*

IF we would understand the joy of the apostles, when “wondering” and scarce-believing they gathered together on this day, saying, “The Lord is risen indeed”—in order to do so, we must first understand their sorrow.

The last week has been putting this before us; and if our hearts have not been too hard, we have been following along with them through the scenes which the Gospels have been telling us. The story has been all told us of that last solemn farewell feast in “the large upper room:” there we have been with Peter and James and John, and that glorious company of the apostles:

there we have seen our Lord and Saviour “rise, and gird Himself with a towel, and wash His followers’ feet :” there we have seen Him “troubled in spirit,” that is, grieved in soul and struck with deep anguish, like one bitten by a serpent, at the traitor Judas’ guilt : from thence we have followed Him to the garden, and have been permitted to see that awful sight pictured to us, how, when withdrawn a stone’s cast from His disciples, He knelt and prayed in unknown agony : then came Judas like a wolf by night upon the fold ; the torches and the lanterns shone upon the olive trees of Gethsemane ; the kiss was given ; the Lord led away, and His disciples forsook Him and fled : we have been with Peter to the hall ; we have been before Pilate’s judgment-seat ; we have heard the Innocent condemned ; the fierce cries of the people have been described to us, preferring the robber and shedder of blood to the Spotless Man : we have seen the heavy scourge descend on that stript and tender body ; the thorny crown forced on ; Him fainting beneath the burden of the cross ; and with John and Mary we have heard the dying cry on Calvary.

Surely though we are not touched to tears, yet it must awaken some sorrow to think of all

this constant meek endurance of One who suffered as never man suffered! And if so, think then what it must have been to those disciples who loved Him and forsook all to follow Him! Sorrow had filled their heart when He said "He must go away"—what must have been their grief when He was gone? Recollect how He, Almighty God, had walked with them as a man; how He, as St. John says, had been to them the Word incarnate, "full of grace and truth," shewing, as St. Paul says, "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily!" What a friend was this to lose, who had been to them all in all—father and mother, brethren and sisters, house and lands! What parting of Naomi and her daughter-in-law, of David and Jonathan, or of any of those who have tenderly loved, can compare with this! When our Lord descended into the tomb it was to His disciples like the light of the sun quenched in the heaven. Sorrow, and gloom, and darkness, fell upon them heavy as the night which fell on Egypt; and their mourning was very bitter, as the mourning of a mother for an only son.

To them, in a literal sense, the "Sun was gone down at mid-day." He had been the light to their feet and lantern to their paths. The

“Shepherd was smitten,” and they were like scattered sheep in the “gloomy and dark day.” The bridegroom was taken away, and the days in which they should fast were come.

This was that “little while” of which He had spoken before—“A little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me”—but as He had foretold their sorrow so also He had foretold their joy—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come, but as soon as she is delivered of the child she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice.”

The mournful Sabbath at length was over—the still sad day during which the Lord lay in the grave—but yet though the Lord had risen indeed, the heart-broken apostles mourned. The women came early on the morning of the first day of the week, and brought them the first news that He was risen, “but their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not”—like heart-broken Jacob when his

sons told him "Joseph is yet alive"—their "spirits fainted, and they believed it not."

How could they believe that He was really come back to them again! How like a dream of joy must it have seemed when it began to break upon their minds that it was true! when the beloved disciple ran to the sepulchre and saw that His Body was gone, and believed: when Mary Magdalene saw Him visibly in the garden, and called Him once again "My Master."

Still the shadows of doubt hung heavy upon them, like the lingering darkness of the night before the sun is well risen upon the fields. The minds of most of the disciples seem to have been like those of the two that went to Emmaus, when Jesus Himself drew near and went with them, and said to them, "What communications are these ye have to one another, as ye walk, and are sad?" And they told Him of Jesus of Nazareth, how He was crucified and was dead; and how they trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and again, they told Him how the tale of certain women of their company had astonished them which were early at the sepulchre, and when they found not the Body, came saying, that they had seen a vision

of angels which said that He was alive." They seem to speak like men in a dream, as if such things could not be real, until He made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread, and their eyes were opened, and they saw that it was indeed the Lord—"And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

Others might indeed have been deceived, it might have been a fancy or a dream, but if Peter had seen Him it was surely true. They seem to have dwelt on the words and to have kept repeating them one to the other, for it is said they found them saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon;" they seem to have caught the good tidings from mouth to mouth, saying the words one to another; and it is certain that it became the common salutation among Christians when they first greeted one another on Easter day to say with joy, "The Lord is risen indeed," and the answer was, "and hath appeared to Simon." While they were thus speaking, "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." No sooner did they believe it really,

than He became visible to them, as if to shew us that we must have faith if we would discern the Lord's presence, but to them that believe He is seen: yet still in their amazement they supposed they saw a spirit; but He to assure them said those touching words, "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your minds? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see!" and then, O most joyful yet most sorrowful sight! most joyful, because it assured them that it was indeed He; most sorrowful, because it told of His sufferings—"When He had thus spoken, He shewed to them His hands and His feet!" pierced as they now were with the marks where the nails had been.

These hands He lifted up over them, and blessed them, when He had led them out as far as Bethany; "And while He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up to heaven. And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God."

Here let us pause and consider that deep and solemn joy of the apostles which we this day commemorate.

First, you observe it is all the way through joined with and springing from suffering; Scripture says that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy; and "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "If we suffer with Him," says St. Paul, "we shall also be glorified with Him;" we may not joy at Easter unless we have mourned in Lent. Thoughtless, careless, and worldly people, who have no regard for what our Saviour endured, who have no part nor lot in the matter, have no right to take to themselves the comforts and joys of religion without its sorrows; it is not possible to feel rightly joy such as at this time unless we are capable, in some degree, of feeling sympathy with the wounds of our Saviour. And our happiness on the day of the resurrection, in order to be real, must be founded on a godly sorrow for our sins, which nailed Him to the cross on Good Friday. We must not then be gay before we have learned to grieve; but if we grieve as we ought and mourn within, we then both may and shall be able to partake of that cheerful joy which the face of our risen Saviour sheds upon us.

Otherwise we must remember the day of the resurrection is to us no day of rejoicing. "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto

Simon," that is, to the loving and weeping apostle, and to Mary who loved and wept, and to John who loved and believed; but to them who neither love, nor weep, nor believe, the Lord hath not appeared, unless it be as He appeared to the heathen watchmen, to whom He rose as a blast of lightning and they became as dead men. To these His resurrection is not lovely but terrible, and a type only of His coming again, when "He shall come with clouds and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

So then, you see, the Lord's rising brings joy to the good, but only sorrow to the bad. Christ went away, it was grief and sorrow to His disciples; but the world was glad. Christ came again, His disciples rejoiced and were glad; but to the world His coming brings wailing. For goodness is to be feared by the wicked as it is to be loved by the good, and Christ is a Judge as well as a Saviour. But to them that "love the Lord's appearing," to those that are faithful and true of heart, the news of the resurrection is indeed tidings of great joy; it is news of the victory over death, it is the proof that the Christian faith is not vain, that not in this life only

have we hope ; it tells us that “love is as strong as death,” that “many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it:” Christ came back to Peter and the friends whom He had left, even from the grave.

It was not that He had gone away from them they knew not when or how ; that He had taken the wings of a dove ; that He had vanished and left them to doubt where He was ; or that He had gone up from them like Elijah in a chariot of fire.

They had seen Him die ; they had seen the blood and water flow out from His side, and the cold dews of death hanging round that sacred brow ; and that voice, like which never man spake, hushed in death ; and His pale lifeless body wrapped in linen and spices to keep it (as they vainly thought) for a little while from corruption and the worm, and laid in the deep quiet grave, and the great stone rolled to the mouth.

From that grave He came back. Oh joy ! from the grave. He laid down in it but to shew that He could conquer it. To conquer it for us. And thus we pray Him ever, “by Thy precious death and burial ; good Lord, deliver us.” If He had gone through every other sorrow of life and death, but had not lain down in the grave, how

should we have dreaded to make our beds in the dark ; how terrible would it be still to lay those whom we love there, and not to know what the end would be. But now that He has been in the grave shall we dread it any more ? Shall we be afraid to go where Christ has been before us ? Shall we fear to leave our dear and loved ones, where Christ was left, in the deep still grave ?

Oh my brethren, my brethren for whom Christ died and rose again, what a sunshine, what a bright pleasant sunshine, does this day throw upon the green turf graves that lie around us ! No longer are they objects of dread and fear ; no longer dwellings of darkness and of gloom : but quiet homes where the bodies of Christians rest for a little while, as Christ rested for three days and then arose and went to heaven. Death could not bind Him ; the grave could not hold Him, neither can it hold us. And death is death no more ; it is the gate of life ; it is, as ancient Christians truly held it, the birthday from above. Would you, if you might choose for yourself, would you choose to live in this world always ? would you be content to go on for ever without any hope of anything better than it can give you ? to pace along this dull flat desert for ever and for ever ? Take it as it is at the best, would

this content you? Surely no! surely He has ruled it much better and more lovingly for you in providing that you should die. The temple in which you dwell here is thoroughly fretted through with the leprosy of sin, and He will un-build it to build again an habitation meet for His kingdom.

Go we out then this Easter day with glad hearts from our house of prayer, from our Easter Communion where Christ is, and as we pass by our brothers' graves let us say "Christ has been there also." And be this our Easter hymn making melody in our hearts, "Christ is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon;" "the Lord is risen indeed, and hath gone before us into Galilee," and "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. And let this hope go with us to guard us from temptation, to gird us to a better service and to good works, the hope of the resurrection of the dead.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

EASTER DAY. No. II.

CHRIST THE FIRST-FRUIT.

1 COR. XV. 20—22. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

THIS, the day of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the great holy day of the Christian year. The forty days of Lent, and (at the end) the solemn season of the Passion, have gone before to prepare us for it; that so, (our flesh being subdued unto the spirit by fasting and abstinence, and our hearts, by devout meditation upon the Cross and Passion of our Saviour, being touched both with a sense of the guilt and danger of sin, and also with a sense of His love and mercy, who shed His precious Blood for us sinners,) we may be fitted to rejoice with true and spiritual joy on this holy day.

Not that it is a hard matter to feel sorrow or joy ; for we needs must sorrow and joy each day we live : but it is a hard matter, for such as we are, to sorrow and to joy when and as we ought ; to sorrow, i. e. for sin, with such godly sorrow as worketh repentance : to joy, for spiritual blessings, with spiritual and Christian joy. It is easy enough to sorrow when God sends pain, sickness, distress, loss ; but this is more like the sorrow of the world, which worketh death : it is easy enough to joy with carnal earthly joy when we are strong and well, and have abundance ; but, as that other is not godly sorrow, so neither is this spiritual joy : and of this we may be assured, that the season of Lent will have been well spent, if we have learned in it this one lesson ; to sorrow for our sins, which brought down Jesus Christ to die for us upon His Cross ; and to joy with true, Christian, and spiritual joy, on this holy day of His Resurrection.

This, as I said, is the great holy day of the Christian year. For the Christian year begins, as you know, in Advent, wherein we keep in mind the first Coming of our Saviour in great humility, and prepare for His second Coming to Judgment : upon that follows Christmas, the season of our Lord's Birth in the flesh : then

Epiphany, or His Manifestation unto the Gentiles : then, soon after, the solemn season of Lent, in memory of His forty days' Fast : and, at the end of Lent, the season of His Agony and Bloody Sweat, His Cross and Passion, His precious Death and Burial : to-day we keep holy in memory of His Glorious Resurrection : there remain but two, after this, Holy Thursday, the day of His Ascension, and Whitsunday, the day of Pentecost, the day of the descent of the Holy Ghost : then follows the season which is named in honour of the Holy and Blessed Trinity, which lasts until Advent comes round again.

Such, as you have before now heard, is the order of the Christian year, the year of the Church of Jesus Christ : and chief and first among these holy seasons stands this holy season of Easter : best of all days, this the day of the Resurrection, the day of the Lord : whereof it may truly be said, in the words of the psalm : " This (above all others) is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

For consider, brethren, how full of comfort is this day of the Lord's Resurrection to us : by it we are assured that Jesus Christ hath paid for us the price of His own precious Blood, as the

price of our redemption : that He hath put away our sins by His one Sacrifice of Himself : that God the Father hath accepted His all-perfect Sacrifice : that the Son of God made man hath, as man and for man, trampled upon sin, and death, and hell, and Satan, by His Cross and Passion. Had not God the Father raised Him again from the dead, men might have doubted whether God had accepted His one Sacrifice for us all ; whether He were indeed the all-sufficient Saviour which we believe Him to be : but all this, and more than this, God the Father hath assured to us by the Resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ : by it He hath confirmed His mission into this sinful world : by it He hath, as it were, again spoken and borne witness to Him, as by the voice from heaven, " This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But there is more, much more than this, in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ ; His Resurrection is a pledge, an assurance, an earnest, of our resurrection also : as He hath risen from the dead, so may we hope to rise, in Him, through Him, with Him : for He is the Head of His mystical body the Church, and we, by holy baptism, are members of Him, parts of His Body. If then the Head is raised up, how shall not the whole

body also? how shall not each member of the Body be raised up together with the Head? Surely this makes the Resurrection of Jesus Christ a most practical truth, one that concerns us greatly; for it need not be said that we have no life, no grace, no health, no power to will or do what is good without Him, or apart from Him: He is the vine, the true vine, we are the branches; engrafted into Him by holy baptism, and drawing all life and fruitfulness from Him by His Spirit; even as the branches draw all life and fruitfulness from the vine; even as the sap, the source of life, flows from the vine into the branches; so doth the Spirit of Christ, the one alone source of all true and inward life, flow forth from Jesus Christ into all that are His, into all that abide in Him, that so they may receive life and nurture and fruitfulness from Him, by His Holy Spirit. And this is the plain teaching of all holy Scripture, that, apart from Christ, without Christ, severed from Christ, we neither are nor can be, we neither do nor can do, any thing that is good: and this is true also of our resurrection: it is by the grace of Christ, by the power of His Spirit, by our communion with Him, that our bodies shall be raised again at the last day: thus what is weak in us be-

comes strong in Him; what is mortal in us becomes immortal in Him; what is vile in us becomes glorious in Him; what is corruptible in us becomes incorruption in Him.

What hath had place in Him we trust shall have place in us also. He is risen, we too shall rise. And this is what St. Paul teaches in the text: not only that Christ hath risen, but also that He hath risen to lead the way for others to follow after. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." And here St. Paul uses the word first-fruits, in order to set before us what was a special type of our Lord's Resurrection, and of our resurrection with Him and in Him. "This very day, Easter day, the day of Christ's rising, according to the law, is the day, or feast, of first-fruits: . . . The day of the Passion is the day of the Passover, and 'Christ is our passover:' the day of the Resurrection ('the morrow after the sabbath' of the passover) is the day of the first-fruits, and Christ is our 'first-fruits.' . . . The rite and manner of the first-fruits [under the law] thus it was. Under the law, they might not eat of the fruits of the earth so long as they were profane. Profane they were, until they were sacred, and on this wise were they sacred. All

the sheaves in a field, for example's sake, were unholy. One sheaf is taken out of all the rest, which sheaf we call the 'first-fruits.' That (sheaf,) in the name of the rest, is lift up aloft, and shaken to and fro before the Lord, and so consecrated. That done, not only the sheaf so lifted up was holy, though that alone was lift up, but all the sheaves in the field were holy, no less than it. The rule is 'If the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy.' "

And this, the wave-sheaf, or first-fruits of the harvest, was ordered to be offered on this very day: the morrow of the sabbath of the passover: i. e. on this high and holy day of Easter. Thus we read Lev. xxiii., "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it . . . and ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the self-same day that ye have brought an offering unto your God." Thus was it under the law: and this type was fulfilled in the Resurrection of our Saviour as on this day. "We were all dead:" as it were, un-

clean sheaves. "One, and that is Christ, this day, the day of first-fruits, was, in manner of a sheaf, taken out of the number of the dead; and, in the name of the rest, lift up from the grave: and, in His rising, He shook, for there was a great earthquake, by virtue whereof, the first-fruits being restored to life, all the rest of the dead are, in Him, entitled to the same hope, in that He was not so lift up for Himself alone, but for us, and in our names: and so the substance of this feast (of the first-fruits) was fulfilled, (on this same day,) in Christ's Resurrection:" as it is said in the text, "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."

This, as you know, is only one instance out of many, how the whole of the Old Testament, in a divine and spiritual sense, speaks of Jesus Christ; how the Law, the Psalms, the Prophets are full of types, and figures, and prophecies of Him.

And this is true, in a special sense, of times and seasons; from the first God ordered times and seasons, and set them apart as holy, with reference to His dispensation of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. Did God on the first day create the light? surely it was as a type and figure of Jesus Christ, the true Light, and of His Resurrection

from the dead, “early the first day of the week.” Did God on this very day, begin the work of creation? surely it was as a type and figure of the new creation in Jesus Christ, of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Did God rest from all His work on the seventh day? surely it was as a type and figure of that great Sabbath (even Easter Even,) wherein the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ rested in the grave; and so, of that rest in Him, which remaineth for the people of God, whereof it is said, “Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” And so of holy days and seasons, under the Law; surely it was no other than the all-wise Providence of God that so ordered it, that from the time of the first Passover, (on the night on which they came up out of Egypt) during fifteen hundred years, the lamb of the Passover should be slain on the same day, and at the same time of the day, on which Jesus Christ died upon His Cross; so that it came to pass on the day of the Crucifixion, that in every house throughout the city of Jerusalem men were slaying the lamb of the Passover at the self-same hour that the true Lamb of the Passover, the true

Lamb of God, "that taketh away the sins of the world," was shedding His sacred Blood, and yielding up His holy Soul unto death, even the death of the cross. And again, surely it was not without deep and spiritual meaning, that on this day, the feast of first-fruits, when the priest offered unto God the first cut sheaf, (whereby to sanctify and make clean the whole harvest of the field,) God was pleased so to order it, as that on this day of first-fruits, Jesus Christ should rise again "from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." Wherefore let us take hope, and comfort, and assurance from this pattern. What though the whole field, the whole harvest, each sheaf of the harvest, was in itself profane and unclean, yet was it all cleansed, sanctified, and blessed, by the one sheaf of first-fruits offered up and waved before the Lord; for not only was that one sheaf, thus raised up, itself made clean and holy, but it had power also from God to make clean and holy all the rest; such as the first-fruits were made, such the whole mass was made; sanctified and accepted of God, and meet for the use of men. So also of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He hath not risen alone, He hath not risen for Himself alone, He hath risen for us, He hath risen as our first-fruits, (as the

sheaf that was waved before the Lord, to bless and consecrate the whole harvest,) "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." He hath risen as man, in our manhood; and we too may hope to rise in Him, with Him, and through Him; nay, there is a sense, in which we are already risen with Him, as parts of His Mystical Body, raised up together with Him, the Head of the Body, Jesus Christ.

Not only have we been buried with Him in holy baptism by a death unto sin; but also in holy baptism we have risen with Him unto a life of righteousness; and He, who hath raised us (when we were dead in trespasses and sins) unto a life of righteousness now, will hereafter raise us unto the life everlasting, if only we abide in Him and be found in Him at the last.

So long as we continue in communion with Jesus Christ, so long we have full and undoubted assurance, that we shall rise with Him to live and dwell with Him for ever; for He is the Head, and His Church is His Body, and all the faithful members are parts of His Body, and so are joined unto Him, the Head. A blessed resurrection, a resurrection unto life, is assured unto all such as,

having been baptized into Jesus Christ, continue in communion with Him (as branches of the vine, as parts of the body) by true repentance, by unfeigned faith, by holy and dutiful obedience, by diligent prayer, by careful use of sacraments and other means of grace ; unto all such there is assured a blessed resurrection unto life in Jesus Christ, so long as they thus continue in communion with Him. Only let them be on their guard (let all be on their guard,) that they lose not this their communion with Jesus Christ by wilful sins, by unfruitful and careless lives, by unbelief, or profane neglect of means of grace, lest they become as dead limbs cut off from the body, withered branches cast out of the vine. All that any persons have to do is, (by faith, and good works, and prayer, and means of grace,) to maintain communion with Jesus Christ ; so to dwell in Him, as that He may dwell in them ; so to abide in Him, as that He may abide in them by His Spirit ; and then, all will follow in due order and course ; He will keep them by His grace in this life ; He will be with them at the hour of death ; He will visit and bless their souls in their place of rest ; He will raise up their bodies at the last day ; He will

raise them up, and He will also change them. "He shall change our vile bodies, that they may be made like unto His glorious body."

And here I will but add a few words on a matter which much concerns us. This day is a blessed day to us, because on this day Jesus Christ rose again from the dead, and we hope and trust ourselves also to rise again with Him; and this hope and trust we have no otherwise than in Him and through Him; as members of His Body, as having His Spirit within us, by whom alone our souls have true spiritual life now, by whom alone our bodies shall be raised hereafter; so that this is plain, all our hope of a glorious and joyful resurrection rests in this, that we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we in Christ, as members of His Body, Christ in us, by His living and life-giving Spirit.

As was said of old by a holy and humble man of God; "The Church is in Christ, as Eve was in Adam. Yea by grace we are every one of us in Christ, and in His Church, as by nature we are in those our first parents. God made Eve of the rib of Adam. And His Church He frameth out of the very Flesh, the very wounded and bleeding side, of the Son of man. His Body crucified, and His Blood shed for the life of the

world, are the true elements of that heavenly being, which maketh us such as Himself is, of whom we come. . . . As therefore we are really partakers of the body of sin and death received from Adam, so, except we be truly partakers of Christ, and as really possessed of His Spirit, all we speak of eternal life is but a dream our corruptible bodies could never live the life they shall live, were it not that here they are joined with His Body, which is incorruptible, and that His is in ours as a cause of immortality, a cause by removing, through the death and merit of His own Flesh, that which hindereth the life of ours."

Now holy Scripture teaches, and the Church hath ever plainly held, that the chief and great means of this union with Christ, (wherein we are made one with Him, and He one with us,) is by communion of His Body and Blood in the holy Sacrament of His Supper ; that it is by this, as a chief means, that we are enabled by His Spirit to live a spiritual life here, and to rise again unto life everlasting hereafter. And here, (in place of any words of my own, in place of any words of man,) I will but repeat the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, that both they who turn away from holy communion may

be warned of their sin, and loss, and danger; and that they who come with devout, faithful, contrite hearts, may learn that they come to receive, not only forgiveness of sins, and increase of spiritual life, grace, strength, and refreshment, but also an earnest, and an assurance of the resurrection, that Jesus Christ will raise up their bodies, which have partaken of His Blessed Body. These are the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, hath everlasting life. I am that Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the Living Bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever; and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I give for the life of the world. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath

sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he, that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that Bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

MONDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

"FIRST TO MARY MAGDALENE."

ST. MARK xvi. 9. *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.*

To see our risen and glorified Saviour is the one great privilege of the Christian life, the end of our faith, and the pledge and assurance of our salvation. Before He suffered, while He was yet compassed about with infirmity, while the burden of the sins of the whole world lay upon Him, and death was still to exercise dominion over Him, He went in and out among men as one of themselves, and all were permitted to approach Him, to behold His gracious countenance, to hear His words of wisdom, love, pity, or rebuke, to sit down with Him to meat, to press upon Him, behind Him, or before Him, or beside Him. One lay in His bosom, another dipped

his hand with Him in the dish : upon some He laid His hands to bless them or to heal : others laid their hands on Him to take Him or to smite Him. Some ministered to Him, others mocked Him. But all alike, His friends and His enemies, those who loved Him, those who feared Him, those who hated Him, those who marvelled at Him, or those who despised and rejected Him, approached Him freely, passed to and fro before Him, or went in and out of His presence. Now and then, indeed, as if to shew His power, and to prefigure His future dealings with men, He withdrew Himself from among them, and did hide Himself, retiring to a mountain or a desert, and taking with Him only His disciples, the twelve whom He had chosen, or the three favoured ones, Peter and James and John. Yet upon the whole it is plain that He sought to be known openly ; He came (they are His own words) “ eating and drinking,” (St. Matt. xi. 19,) associating alike with publicans and sinners, Scribes and Pharisees, believing Galileans, and unbelieving Jews ; despised Samaritans and world-ruling Romans.

But when His humiliation was passed, and He had risen victorious over death and sin, all this was changed. He no longer appeared to

the unbelieving multitude; but only to His disciples; and to them, in measure and order; not to all at once, but to witnesses whom He had chosen; to some after one manner, to others after another. The Pharisees who had bought Him for thirty pieces of silver, that they might deliver Him to death; the people who had rejected Him and chosen a murderer in His place; the unjust and cowardly judge who had condemned Him for the friendship of Cæsar, were not permitted to see Him at all after He rose from the dead: and even to His faithful followers He shewed Himself only for a little while, and from time to time, first to one, then to three, then to ten, then to eleven, and finally to above five hundred brethren at once. It is very remarkable that it should have been so: and it may be profitable for us to take some few of our Lord's appearances to His disciples after His resurrection, and see if we cannot discover that law of wisdom, love, and tender consideration, which certainly regulated them all. It was not by chance that "He appeared *first* to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils;" that "after that He appeared in *another form* unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country," and that "afterwards

He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat." It was not by chance that Thomas was not with them on His first appearance among them, but that he had to wait an eight days longer for the satisfaction of his ardent craving after sight and touch. All these various manifestations of Himself were ordered by the divine wisdom of a serene love and perfect sympathy.

Let us dwell to-day upon His first appearance, early on the first day of the week, to Mary Magdalene: and oh, may our meditation on this subject bring comfort and true heavenly joy to some penitent heart! May those whose many sins have been forgiven, learn of the Magdalene to love much; as they come to know more perfectly how much they are beloved.

It seems that Mary Magdalene was the first of all believers to visit the sepulchre on Easter morn: "the first day of the week, early, *while it was yet dark*," she was there; and finding "the stone taken away from the sepulchre: then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." On hearing this, Peter and John returned with her to the sepulchre. "So they

ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre." Here then we have beside the tomb of the risen Saviour three of His disciples, all remarkable for their love, yet each loving Him after a different manner, and as different in their previous lives as in their present affections: different too in the manifestation of their love. St. Peter's love was ardent: St. John's was deep: Mary's was tender: and each of these holy affections expressed itself in its own peculiar way. "The deep and controlled character of St. John's love was shewn by his reverence: "Stooping down and looking in, he saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in." His love had carried him swiftly to the place where his Lord had lain; being younger and more active he "did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre:" but there reverence restrained his feet. This was the disciple who had leaned on Jesus' breast at supper: the saint who, we may well suppose, had never fallen into deadly sin. The ardour of St. Peter's love is shewn in bold eagerness to know all that could be known concerning the body of his Lord. "Then cometh Simon Peter following him, *and went into the sepulchre*, and seeth the linen clothes lie." It was a holy bold-

ness, as we may judge from St. John's following him, encouraged to do that by the example of an elder which he had refrained from doing on his own responsibility; yet notwithstanding he was right, we cannot but feel that it was the act of the same man who had said a few days before, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee."

But in the love which was borne by Mary Magdalene to her Lord, whose body she had come to visit and anoint while it was yet dark, there was a depth of tenderness peculiarly suitable to her whose many sins had been forgiven so graciously; and who amidst her tears of shame and penitence had been openly acknowledged and commended by Him whose feet she washed with her tears. And this tenderness of love was shewn in all her conduct on the morning of the resurrection. We see it first in her trembling dread of admitting a hope which after all might be disappointed. He whose love was calm and deep "*saw and believed.*" She whose love was tender and devoted durst not cherish hope, lest disappointment should make her anguish still more unbearable. Yet to us poor sinners, the tenderness and the trembling seem more lovely, (for we can better sympathize with them,) than

the calmness and the confidence ; and on this occasion they bore a rich fruit. “ Then the two disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping.” The ardent Peter and the believing John went away again to their own home : but the woman that was a sinner, the trembling weeping penitent remained : and a glorious reward was granted to her faithful devotion. “ As she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” But even this bright vision does not seem to have removed her trembling fears, nor to have assured her that He whom she sought among the dead was alive again for evermore : for in answer to their enquiry, “ Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” It has been supposed that when our blessed Lord hung upon the cross in the agonies of death, Mary Magdalene threw herself upon her knees, and clasping her arms around the cross, remained there till He died. Whether this be true or not, we know from Holy Scripture that “ There stood by the cross of Jesus His mother,

and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and *Mary Magdalene*;" (St. John xix. 25;) and it should seem as if the sight of that mangled and bleeding body had so impressed her imagination, and so sunk into her heart, that she could think of nothing else. It seems to have been impossible for her to realize any other form than that dead one. For "when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus, and knew not that it was Jesus:" and even when she heard Him speak and enquire, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" she did not recognise His voice, but, "supposing Him to be the gardener, she saith unto Him, Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

But now her sufferings had continued long enough. Anguish, terror, grief, fear, and doubt, had torn her for three days with conflicting miseries, while love had triumphed over all, and kept her constant and devoted to Him who had pronounced her sentence of forgiveness. Now came joy inexpressible: a joy which would have been overwhelming had she not, unconsciously perhaps, been gradually prepared for it. First she had seen the stone rolled away. Then she had stood by while St. John departed from the

sepulchre believing; then she had seen a vision of angels, and lastly her Lord Himself, and had heard His voice, yet knew Him not. Now He revealed Himself to her in the tenderest and gentlest manner possible: "Jesus saith unto her, MARY." The "good Shepherd" called "His own sheep by name," and she "knew His voice:" it was the voice of the most tender love and pity. "She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master." (St. John xx. 1—16.)

O great and glorious privilege to be granted unto "a woman who was a sinner," that she should first of all behold her risen Lord! "He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils."

O wondrous condescension of the pure and spotless Jesus! Before all His disciples; before the ardent Peter; before the disciple whom He loved; before even His own mother He appeared to the poor despised outcast woman whose very touch was supposed by the "righteous" Pharisee to have been pollution. "This man," said Simon, "if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched Him: for she is a sinner:" (St. Luke vii. 39 :) yet this was she to whom it pleased Him in His infinite

wisdom and deepest compassion to appear, after His resurrection, first of all.

And if we may be permitted reverently to enquire why she of all others should enjoy so high a privilege, I think we may say,—1. That she, more than others, stood in need of this special tenderness of loving comfort; because her past deep guilt and present deep love would combine to make her miseries more unbearable than those of others. The remembrance of past guilt rises up in times of sorrow, as old wounds open afresh in sickness or in weakness. She had indeed heard the gracious words, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” (St. Luke vii. 48,) but she had since seen her Lord enduring the penalty of those sins, and that sight had revived her grief in all its bitterness. Not that we have any reason to suppose she had doubted her forgiveness. On the contrary, the very certainty of her forgiveness would make her feel more deeply His agony and death who had forgiven her: and thus it was that her past guilt and her present love so wondrously combined to cause her an overpowering anguish. The great forgiveness produced great love; and great love overwhelmed her in great sorrow. The more tenderly she loved now, the more deeply she grieved for those

sins which no doubt she felt had in some mysterious way brought Him to whom her life was devoted to misery, shame, and death, even the death of the cross. This loving sorrow, this sorrowing love, kept her, weeping, near the sepulchre of Jesus: and thus she was prepared to meet Him who with infinite compassion for the guilty and the miserable, and with infinite sympathy for the penitent, shewed Himself first to Mary Magdalene. The same compassion which provided a special message to the fallen and penitent Peter, ("Go tell His disciples *and Peter* that He goeth before you into Galilee,") chose the sinner, now a penitent, as the first to whom He should appear after His resurrection.

2. But again it may be said that this high privilege was a fitting reward for the faithful devotion and tender affection shewn by Mary Magdalene to her departed Lord: and some perhaps may wonder why this reason should not have been mentioned first. It was indeed, so far as we can judge, most fitting that she whose tender faithfulness had kept her near the burial-place of her Saviour, should be the first witness of His resurrection; that she who had sought Him early should find Him early. And we may say with truth that she had the reward of her

constancy : yet, after all, it was His grace, not her virtue, that obtained the reward. His love was the cause of hers. His all-pervading Spirit had sought her out, and found her wallowing in the mire of sin, and had drawn her heart towards the love of holiness in the person of Christ. His purity, His grace, His infinite pity, His words of gracious forgiveness and tender comfort, had knit her heart to Him for ever, as her Lord and Master, “her Saviour, her God, and her might, in whom she should trust; her buckler, the horn also of her salvation, and her refuge.” (Ps. xviii. 1.) And the depth of devotion which she shewed at His crucifixion, and on the morning of His resurrection, was only the development, under the influence of His Holy Spirit, of that love of which His was the source. While, then, we acknowledge that the earliest vision of the risen Saviour was her suitable reward, we must bear in mind that it was His own grace in her that He rewarded : and that in her case, as in that of every sinner saved from death, and raised up with Christ unto newness of life, He was “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” (Rev. xxii. 13.)

3. In conclusion, this special favour shewn to the Magdalene will serve for ever as an unspeak-

able comfort and high encouragement to poor weeping penitents, tender-hearted and dejected: only half-received, perhaps, among Christian men, and looked upon with coldness and suspicion by many an upright elder brother. Mary had once stood at the feet of Jesus weeping, an object of contempt in the house of Simon the Pharisee: but One was there who knew the depth of her penitence and the devotion of her newly-kindled love. Again, she “stood without at the sepulchre weeping:” and those tears also were noted in God’s book. Jesus had not yet appeared, but those tears stirred the depths of His divine compassion, and He shewed Himself first to Mary Magdalene.

Who then is there among you, my brethren, that “weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks she hath none to comfort her?” (Lam. i. 2.) Approach with Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre of Jesus: draw near to His burial-place by frequent meditation, early in the morning while it is yet dark: abide there in penitent sorrow for the sins which crucified Him, and He will manifest Himself to you early on His resurrection morn. He will not leave you in your sorrow one moment longer than He sees to be good for your soul’s healing. If He hath

torn, it is that He may heal you: if He hath smitten, it is that He may bind you up. The promise by His prophet is sure, "After two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." (Hos. vi. 1, 2.) Some may have to wait for His full manifestation of Himself until the evening of His resurrection day; some may see Him, not beside His open tomb, but as they are walking by the way, holding sad converse one with another; some may have to wait for eight days after His first appearance; but the wounded heart claims His peculiar pity: He deals tenderly with the bruised reed, and fans the flame of the smoking flax: the broken and the contrite heart He will not despise: "but to this man," He promises, "will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." (Isa. lxvi. 2.) And so we may be quite sure He will manifest Himself early in the morning to those who need that special consolation. He will "appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isa. lxi. 3.) And when He does make Himself known unto them it will be with the utmost tenderness, He will call them by name. "Thus saith the Lord,

that created thee, O Jacob, that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Isa. xliii. 1—3.)

Only we must remember that we are not the judges of our own spiritual necessities: but He that knows the heart: and whether we have to wait a longer or shorter time for the fuller manifestation of His presence, infinite wisdom tempered by infinite mercy will regulate His dealings with us. His mercy was not less towards Thomas than towards Mary Magdalene, though one saw Him immediately after His resurrection, and the other not until a weary week of doubt and fear had passed away: but in His careful compassion He considered "the more confirmation of the faith," for succeeding ages, as in His wisdom He measured to the hardly-believing Apostle his fitting discipline. To each He shewed Himself as each was able to bear it, and in a condition to profit by it. He dealt with each according to

the Wisdom of a perfect Love. But most peculiarly happy was Mary Magdalene, who loving our Lord Jesus Christ above all things, obtained the pardon of her sins, and a part in His glorious resurrection. May we also through the eternal pity, receive the remission of our sins, and come at length to the light of everlasting Life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TUESDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

ST. MARK xvi. 12. *After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.*

To see our risen Saviour is, as I said yesterday, the glorious privilege of the children of God, the end of all their hopes, and the sufficing reward of their fidelity: but in the history of the two disciples on their journey to Emmaus, we read of those who saw our Lord, yet knew Him not. "Jesus appeared to them," says St. Augustine, "they saw Him with their eyes, yet did not recognise Him. The Master walked with them in the way, and was Himself the Way; but they did not yet walk in the Way: but He found them wandering from the Way. For when He was with them before His passion He had foretold them all,—that He should suffer, and die, and the third day rise again: all He had foretold: but His death threw them into obli-

vion. They were so perplexed when they saw Him hanging on the tree that they forgot His teaching, looked not for His resurrection, nor held fast His promises."

How, then, did it come to pass that they should see Him yet not know Him? "Their eyes," we are told, "were *holden* that they should not know Him." It was the will of Christ that while He appeared to their bodily eyes, and spoke in their hearing, and taught their unbelieving hearts, they should not know that it was He. And this, if we may judge, because they did not believe. "We *trusted*," they said, "that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel:" but now their trust has failed them. "O disciples," adds the same holy man, "did ye trust, and do ye not trust now? Behold, Christ liveth, and trust is dead in you! Yea, Christ liveth: the living Christ findeth the hearts of His disciples dead." Yet their faith had not altogether failed them. They still spoke of "Jesus of Nazareth" as "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." Amidst all their fears and doubts He was still to them a mighty prophet, though not as yet the Lord of prophets and of angels. They believed that He had come from God: but they did not believe that He had risen

from the dead, though He had foretold that it should be so, and though the faithful women of their company had assured them that they had "seen a vision of angels which said that He was alive."

Let us then trace the dealings of our blessed Saviour with these two disciples, Cleopas, and, as some suppose, St. Luke, in whose gospel the narrative is contained: and let us see whether, taught, as we trust, by God's Holy Spirit, we cannot trace His wisdom, His love, His gracious condescension to their infirmity, and perfect sympathy with their difficulties.

They were on their journey, on the day of His resurrection, to Emmaus, a village about seven miles from Jerusalem, "and they talked together of all these things which had happened," of His betrayal, His trial, His rejection by the people, His condemnation, His crucifixion, His death and burial, and the reports which had reached them that morning of His resurrection: and as they talked they were sad. Their hearts were still with Him whom they had followed in His humiliation. Their affections were not alienated from Him, though their faith was feeble. They could not speak on any subject but that one, although they were probably on a journey of busi-

ness ; nor did they speak with cold and unmoved hearts, though they doubted, and feared, and “reasoned.”

“And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.” It is good for religious persons to speak of Christ, when they speak with reverence, though they may even speak in much perplexity and doubt. “Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him:” or as St. Mark expresses it, “He appeared unto them in another form:” and taking advantage of their ignorance to draw them out into unrestrained intercourse with Him, that He might prepare them to know Him, He enquired of them, “What manner of communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk, and are sad?” and when they wonderingly ask Him, “Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days?” He enquires again, “What things?” Yes, He that knew all things twice enquired of them the object of their communications, that He might, as if ignorant, draw them on to confess to Him all their thoughts. It was not enough that He should know their

intellectual difficulties, their pressing doubts, their feeble hopes, but He must know them from their own lips. And so they tell Him all: how bright their hopes had been, how sadly they were crushed, how heavily the three days of despondency had pressed upon them, how even the message of the women, who had seen the angels, had added only astonishment to their previous distraction.

Their minds required to be calmed down from the state of over-wrought excitement in which our Lord found them: they required to be dealt with tenderly and gently, and to be led gradually to understand that the vision of angels and their tidings was no impossible delusion, but a foreshadowing to them of the glorious truth which was to set their minds and hearts at rest: they needed to be led on step by step towards the vision of their risen Lord in the fulness of an understanding faith. Mary Magdalene's preparation was of the affections, lest too sudden a shock should overwhelm her tender and sensitive love: theirs must be a preparation, partly intellectual, partly moral. She had, we may well suppose, no intellectual difficulties, but her heart was stunned by the severity of her sorrow, and so, after a number of events had warned her of the

coming joy, and fitted her to bear it, His presence was communicated by the simple pronunciation of her name. They "communed together and reasoned." The judgment of the chief priests and rulers seems to have weighed with them; the three days silence perplexed them; foreshadowing facts astonished them. While, therefore, He rebukes them, He leads them back at once to the law and to the prophets. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." O most gracious condescension to the varying weaknesses of men! He who had revealed Himself to the weeping penitent by one tender word, seeks out the thoughtful, doubtful, reasoning men, joins Himself to them on their way, enters into their converse, unfolds, or rather leads them to unfold, their doubts, and then conducts them by Scripture proof, from law-giver and prophet, (at the same time causing their hearts to burn within them,) to the faith of His resurrection, and finally reveals Himself to them in the holy Sacrament of His body and blood. It was the same divine consideration which gave

the loving word to Mary, contact with the sacred wounds to Thomas, the exposition of Scripture and the sacramental grace to the two disciples who were journeying to Emmaus.

One other feature of His dealings with them remains to be noticed ; when He had taken bread and blessed it, and broken, and given to them : when their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, then "He vanished out of their sight," or as we read in the margin, "ceased to be seen of them." "He departed from them in body when He was apprehended of them by faith," says St. Augustine. And now they converse together again : but in how different a strain ! Then they reasoned and were sad, now they make confession with joy ; "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures ?" And then, desirous of communicating to others the happiness they had received, "they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them," not, as, perhaps, they expected to find them, sad and sorrowful, and needing their consolation, but prepared to enter at once into their joy, "saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath

appeared unto Simon ;” and so to sympathizing listeners “they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.”

What, then, to use again the words of the great teacher of the western Church, “What does this history convey to us? Some great lesson, if we may understand it.”

There are those among us who are in a great measure spared temptations to the grosser sins : either by the circumstances of their education, or by the constitution of their frame, they are less tempted than the multitude of men by the natural fleshly appetites, and their hearts are, by the good Spirit of God, drawn away from the love of worldly honours and emoluments : and all their thoughts and affections are occupied in the highest questions that can engage the interest of men. While they are young, eager, and hopeful, their minds have free course throughout the universe of God, and they find a pleasure, very similar to that which others experience in athletic exercises, in searching deeply into the various systems of philosophy and morals, which men have from time to time devised : but as age advances on them, and the relations of life multiply around them ; as from mere learners they are called upon

to become guides and teachers of others; as their own spirits begin to yearn towards rest; and they learn that not perpetual search, but calm faith, is the healthful condition of the human soul, and the only vantage ground for the teacher of his fellows, then their deepest affections and most earnest meditations all draw them towards the risen Saviour, as their only haven of rest, their only sure abiding place. But, since none can pass through this life without temptations, their trial is found, perhaps, in this very sanctuary of holy thoughts: and when they would fain console their tossed and wearied mind and heart with simple faith in a risen and everliving Saviour, they find themselves wandering in the mist of strange doubts and perplexities: so they commune with their own spirits, or one with another, as they walk, and are sad. They look back with regret to the simple contentedness of their childish faith, and fear that it will never return to them again. "We trusted," they say, "that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," but now they are perplexed with what appear to them endless reasonings. This, my brethren, is no imaginary trial: it is indeed a frequent one, and one under which many impatient and wilful spirits fall, we cannot but fear, into hope-

less perdition. But it is not only the impatient or the wilful who are thus tried : and I have seen this sore temptation pressing heavily even upon aged saints of God, and adding intensity to the sufferings of the bed of pain and languor.

But for these trials also, as well as for the more ordinary ones, our Lord has the deepest and tenderest sympathy. The true-hearted and honest enquirer for the Truth will never be forsaken nor left to grope his way alone upon the dark mountains of unbelief or scepticism. Let those who are thus tried and afflicted seek counsel of more advanced and experienced Christians. Let the true-hearted, perplexed with the difficulties that are presented by the prevalence and power of evil, "speak often to one another" in "the fear of the Lord," and "a book of remembrance" will be written before Him for them that fear the Lord, and that think upon His Name. "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." (Mal. iii. 16, 17.) Let them speak with reverent affection of their Saviour, even if their hearts are overwhelmed with difficulties, and then He will join Himself to them : He will enter into all their fears and

perplexities : He will deal gently and compassionately with them ; He will lead them on step by step towards a complete restoration of their faith in Him, and after opening and expounding to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, He will finally reveal Himself in the breaking of bread.

Nothing tends more to the calming of the mind, and the settlement of a shaken faith, than the reverent reception of the Holy Communion. The idea of a sacramental presence, is one that gains entrance into the mind when it is closed, by moral or intellectual difficulties, against the full and entire reception of any other proof of the presence of the Incarnate Saviour with His redeemed people. For when our Lord in His gracious condescension thus visits us, while He at the same time opens to us in the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, He enters in by the two-leaved gates of flesh and spirit, into the inmost recesses of our wondrously constituted human hearts : so that while we kneel at His holy Table we apprehend Him, in mind and soul and heart, and He is known to us with the highest vividness of perception that is possible in this life : and should He after that in some sense vanish out of our sight, yet we may

trust that we shall not return to the state of miserable disquietude in which we were before : but still retain Him within us by a calm and settled, if not a strong and overpowering faith ; and our hearts be conscious of the presence of a satisfied love which we knew not before. For even thus was it with the two disciples who had communicated with Him at Emmaus. As they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, they said one to another, " Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures ? " and when they had joined their fellow-disciples " they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. " The remembrance of the reasonings, the arguments, and the proofs had passed away ; but the burning affection of the heart, and how He was known unto them in breaking of bread, remained in all its freshness.

Even so with those of us who have passed through the deep waters of doubt. When those doubts have all been satisfied, when our Lord Himself has by His Spirit opened to us the Scriptures, and when we have again and again known Him in the breaking of bread, we do not find ourselves compelled to go frequently step by step

through those laborious proofs which the reason at one time required. The holiest affections of our nature have tasted for themselves, and seen how gracious the Lord is, and they may say to the intellect as the men of Sychar to the woman of Samaria, "Now we believe not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." (St. John iv. 42.) And if we are obliged to go through the process of intellectual proof again it will mostly be for the sake of others. For ourselves St. Peter's advice would be, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:" for others he would add, "And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. iii. 15.)

But I observed that even aged servants of God were sometimes afflicted with perplexing doubts, even on the bed of sickness. Wonderful mystery of human probation! but equally wonderful manifestation of the power of divine grace and depth of divine sympathy! Jesus does not forsake His tried servants in the hour of their temptation: for a little while their eyes may be holden that they should not know Him, but He secretly by His Spirit opens to them some one

scripture concerning Himself: or He so strengthens them with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that by one bold effort they are enabled to throw off the doubt as a temptation from the wicked one: and asking of the stewards of the mysteries for the breaking of bread, the sunshine of the divine love gleams out upon them again in all its unclouded majesty as they receive Christ in His own sacred ordinance.

Such overshadowings of the faith of more matured Christians are for the most part mere passing clouds: or if they abide longer, they are but as a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet them: and even though in answer to a thrice repeated prayer they are not removed, the invigorating reply is heard, "My grace is sufficient for thee:" (2 Cor. xii. 7—9;) and so we find the truth fulfilled, to our great encouragement, in our own days, "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Let these tried servants of God speak, then, to their younger brethren: and let me entreat you, whose hearts are yet tender and beat high with glorious hopes, to hear them from their sick bed—or even from their silent graves: and what is their united voice but this: Rise up young men, early in the morning of your spiritual lives,

and seek the tomb of Jesus : abide there in silent meditation, awaiting the hour when He will manifest Himself to you more clearly than ye have yet seen Him : and as ye go forward on the journey of life let your converse in all reverence and awe be of Him, and His work of love for you : and, then, although you may have to endure many sore conflicts with the powers of darkness, He will never leave you unaided in the struggle ; but will walk beside you, and hold converse with you, and prepare you to know Him as He is, your rest, your stay, your one hope in life, your only true guide through the temptations to which your immortal spirit is exposed : then He will appear unto you in His own good time ; a time appointed in wisdom and love ; and when you have seen Him, and known Him you will find that, even before He had revealed Himself fully, your heart burned within you in love for Him who was your Redeemer and your unseen teacher : and then as the evening of life draws on, you will say to Him, " Abide with us for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent," and He will enter in and "tarry with you." Let Him, then, be your portion, who will alone suffice you. Love Him truly, and His love will never fail you. Seek Him early, and you shall

find Him : when we know not, and how we need not enquire ; but He will manifest Himself in His own way, and at His own time, and will come unto you with His Father and the Holy Spirit, and make His abode with you for ever. (St. John xiv. 23.)

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN SOLITUDE.

ST. JOHN XX. 17. *Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not ;
for I am not yet ascended.*

THERE was haste on Easter morning, but not like this world's haste, which is noisy, tumultuous, bustling. It was the haste of heaven, which is inconceivable in speed, but quiet, silent, noiseless.

Man's movements are attended necessarily with labour, and struggling, and noise, because of the impediments and obstacles which he has to overcome ; and after all they are slow in comparison, and easily measured.

But the orbs of heaven, vast as they are, glide over their enormous journeys with rapidity past utterance, and the movements of the elements which fill creation, light and heat and electricity, seem even infinitely speedier still. Yet there is neither speech nor language. All is calm, and hushed, and noiseless. There is no opposition or impediment to the majesty of their boundless march.

Much more is this true of the spiritual world, and the operations of Almighty love within it, and as far as God's children are moved by His Holy Spirit, so far do they exhibit the same characteristics. Haste in calm and calm in haste are continually assigned to God and to His work ; and haste in calm and calmness in haste are as repeatedly enjoined upon His servants.

In operation we call them zeal and patience ; and zeal in patience and patience in zeal are the two great characteristics of God's saints, as they are in an infinitely superior and perfect manner the attributes of God Almighty.

They are the necessary consequences or operations of love, real love ; for love is full of zeal, and yet also full of patience. Because it is zealous, it hastes ; because it is patient and can wait, it is calm. Its zeal does not degenerate into fanaticism or pure enthusiasm, nor does its calm fade into stupidity and lethargy. It is certain of itself, and therefore self-possessed. It throws itself out of itself, and therefore is earnest, active, eager.

You see love working thus in parents toward their children, or in those deeply attached to each other, but prevented by circumstances from being united together. Those moved by such strong

affections are inexpressibly ardent in their longings, and yet from the very strength of their love can wait in patience for the accomplishment of their wish.

Much more is this true of spiritual love, as exhibited in God's faithful servants; and how much more is this true of God who is love, and whose love shed abroad in the hearts of His saints makes them to be what they are.

It was decreed in the eternal counsels of God that the Son of God should be three days in the grave. But He hasted greatly to rise again. He prevented all His creatures in His resurrection. He had said, "I have a baptism that I must be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished;" and now He had been baptized with the baptism of death, and buried in the depths of the grave. Surely He yearned to break the bonds and burst the gates which imprisoned and straitened Him. He yearned to rise again victorious over death and hell. He yearned to come forth leading our captivity captive, with His glorious spoil of ransomed souls, "glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." He who had taken our flesh into His Godhead, that in it He might

make atonement for us by death, hasted greatly to arise as a quickening Spirit to apply to us through that same flesh and blood His own resurrection power, that life, that eternal virtue and energy, which the cords of death and the powers of darkness could not hold. He hasted greatly to manifest the Father's majesty, being "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." He hasted greatly to display the mighty working of God's Holy Spirit, when as "through the eternal Spirit He had offered Himself without spot to God," so now quickened by the same Spirit He rose the mighty anointed King and Priest, with the keys of death and hell, and the keys also of life and heaven in His hand, to present Himself before the Father, as the great Intercessor, "able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

We may well imagine also that He hasted greatly to manifest Himself as the beginning of the new creation of God, the first-begotten from the dead, to all the orders of heavenly angels, by whom He was to be worshipped, and who had been stooping to gaze into the mystery of His life and death with unutterable desires of love.

He had been hasting greatly to reveal Himself as the pledge and first-fruit of the great final revival and renewal, the head and garment of the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

He also beyond doubt hastened greatly to shew Himself to His mourning disciples, scattered as sheep who had lost their shepherd on the gloomy and dark mountains; left in unutterable grief and anguish at the loss of Him whom they trusted should have been He who should redeem Israel, in shame at their desertion, in great fear and dread, in utter overwhelming helplessness. He yearned to admit them, and Peter in particular after his threefold denial, to a participation in Easter gladness, in the joy and victory of His resurrection. He longed to enfold them in the gracious embrace of His love, and make them His witnesses to Judæa and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And His love was greater than theirs, greater than the angels', greater than creation's. For His love was God's love, and God is love. Therefore was His zeal strongest of all, and His haste speedier than all.

The sun rose early, and the disciples earlier, and the angels earlier still; but Jesus earliest of all.

The loving women came before the sun was up, but the angel had rolled away the stone before the women came, and the Lord had risen before the stone was rolled away. Yet though there was this pious zealous haste, there was the calm of perfect obedience, the stillness of deep silence. The sun rose not before its usual hour, according to God's ordinance.

The holy women waited until the Sabbath was over, according to God's commandment, and the angel waited until the Lord was risen, according to God's institution, and the Lord waited until the third day came, according to God's prophecy.

When the Lord rose no created eye beheld Him. There was no appearance, no sound, no movement. His soul through the Spirit came back into the body, and it rose in its resurrection power, and in that strength passed out through the yet closed grave. The seal was on the stone, and the soldiers watched around. But He whom they kept was gone. The new creation was begun. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, but exactly at the appointed time of God, the first-begotten from the dead rose and revived, that He might be the Lord of the dead and of the living, that in Him He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in

heaven and which are in earth, even in Him, and that He might be the beginning and the assurance of that last universal resurrection and renewal which shall also take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.

Surely that day of the Lord hastened greatly, and yet kept its calm and regular march, and the Lord hastened greatly to it, but yet with the unwearied patience of perfect resignation and obedience.

And then it came, at the appointed time it came, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, without external sign or token, in complete silence and secrecy. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

And now the time is arrived, the Lord will reveal Himself. He will for the first time shew Himself to His appointed witnesses. And to whom will He first appear? Whose eyes, of all His disciples, will He first deign to bless? Whose ears will He first thrill with the sound of His voice? Whose heart will He first revive with the assurance of His resurrection?

He passes by all that He may first shew Himself to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. She shall first behold and hear her risen Lord. She shall be His first witness

and messenger, an apostle to the apostles. Let us follow up what we said of this on Easter Monday, and unfold more fully the lesson which is here taught.

Why did He bestow on her such a signal honour? Was it to mark His tenderness for the penitent? Was it to mark the over-abundance of His forgiveness? Was it because of the singleness of her love? Was it because of the depth of her grief, of her utter disconsolateness at the loss of her Lord?

Who shall dare boldly to declare the reason? But this is evident. She was hasting after Him, and waiting for Him; apparently hasting after Him, and waiting for Him, more than all the rest of the disciples. And to her He reveals Himself first of all.

“Mary;” He names her. It is His voice; as He pronounces her own name she recognises the known and beloved accents. It revealed the Saviour; it witnessed that He was amongst the living; that He had revived with the same feelings, the same tenderness, the same gracious affections, the same human heart, the same Divine love. It testified that He had not forgotten or forsaken His mourning disciples; that He had come back again to speak to them, to

own them, to be with them, to converse with them, to acknowledge them as friends; for He calls her by her name as He had been accustomed during His earthly sojourn.

The voice of angels had been insufficient to reassure her; but "the voice of the Lord is mighty in operation." It restored her to herself; or rather it restored Jesus to her, who was more than herself.

And now she evidently would once more, in the haste of her love, in her overwhelming revival and joy, have cast herself at Jesus' feet, and once more embraced them and washed them with tears, not now of contrition, but gladness, gladness and thankfulness unspeakable, crying, *Rabboni*, that is, Master. She was about thus to indulge her delight, when the Lord checks her, checks her graciously but decidedly.

"Touch Me not," He says, "for I am not yet ascended to My Father." By His coming, His call, His merciful salutation, He approved her love, He recompensed the haste of her ardent zeal; but then by this check He composed and hushed it; He stilled it at once into its proper reverence and awe.

As if He had said, *Thou hastest greatly to Me, to full communion with Me, and the entire assur-*

ance of My love. And I am the same Saviour and Master as before, unchanged, unchangeable ; but I am now revealed far more distinctly in My true character, shewn to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead, and come forth as the quickening Spirit for the new creation of God's people.

I have better things in store for thee than such a touch as I before vouchsafed to thee, even that touch wherewith I regenerate, and convert, and new create the heart ; that spiritual touch by which I give Myself, and My life, and My love, to My true penitents and My faithful disciples ; that spiritual touch by which I testify that I am in them and they in Me, that I and the Father are come to take up our abode in them ; that touch by which I betroth them to myself in everlasting espousals, make them members of My body, of My flesh, and of My bones.

And in this spiritual touch, transformation, and renewal, I give the earnest and foretaste of the everlasting and perfect communion and union of heaven. When I am ascended thou shalt touch Me thus ; when I am gone from thee into heaven I shall be with thee thus : there shalt thou really touch Me and know Me. Therefore, because I have so far better things for thee in store, I re-

fuse thee this present touch now. Thou must wait. In patience, in the calmness, in the heavenly stillness of assured hope, thou must bide My time, and receive Me, not as thou wouldest at the moment, but as I give Myself to thee, by number, weight, and measure, after the order and course of God's glorious kingdom, and the majestic purposes of His unbounded love.

There is a little still of earth, a little mist of ignorance, a slight shade of carnal apprehension, in thy present longing, and thy too eager haste. In due time My veil shall be withdrawn ; and I only withhold from thee the lesser, to encompass and fill thee with the greater blessing.

“Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.”

I have work for you to do : therefore for this reason also you must wait. Go and be My apostle to My apostles, announce to them the joy which I have now bestowed on you. Remind them that they also must wait with thee ; because I go to prepare a place for you. Therefore you must wait ; “but if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and take you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also.”

Brethren, at this resurrection season, we would bring home to our hearts its joyfulness and gladness ; we would re-echo and repeat in our hearts the mutual jubilees and hosannahs which filled the hearts of His disciples as the mighty truth of the Saviour's return forced itself upon them ; His appearance to His disciples presignify and describe His spiritual revelations of Himself to His disciples' hearts.

But if you would see Him at all, you must haste after Him, and yet in your haste you must be patient and obedient.

The promises of spiritual joy and blessedness are equally to those who love and so haste, and yet are patient and so wait.

If there be any here who have fallen and gone astray, who have committed many sins, and whom the Lord has wonderfully aroused, revived, recovered, out of whom He has cast many devils, as He did out of Mary Magdalene, first behold Christ's love for penitents. He appeared first to her, named her name first of all, shewed his risen form first of all to her, on her, first of all, bestowed His Easter joy.

How can any one be discouraged, or doubt of Christ's compassion, or exclude himself from Christ's mercy, or remain trembling and half-

hearted, when he considers this first manifestation of Jesus, and the tender graciousness by which it is distinguished?

He who saved publicans and sinners, who first on Easter-day appeared to Mary Magdalene, is as ready to receive, as willing to forgive, as strong to cleanse, as tender to love, as merciful to bless now as then.

Will He keep back from you the best robe, or the fatted calf, or the holy Eucharist, or the festal songs?

But then He must see in us the much love of the much forgiven, and the marks of this love are still the same; haste and calmness; the haste of zeal, the calmness of patient waiting, which are always the marks of true and deep love.

You will be like the Magdalene then at the sepulchre of Jesus. You will in silence and solitude, with contrition, and tears, and sorrow, be always seeking after Him, in your own hearts where you once had buried Him by forgetfulness, having crucified Him through sin.

You will love to be alone, and commune with your own heart of your own sinfulness and Jesus' mercies; you will be yearning and panting for tokens of His love, for abounding consolation and

refreshment, and these are for a season denied: and you are in heaviness, deep overwhelming anxiety and sorrow; your sins vex you. They have taken away your Lord and you know not where they have laid Him.

Haste after Him then indeed, by prayers, by watchings, by tears, by humiliation and by mercies; by lonely and deep communion with yourself and with His Word; haste after Him eagerly, earnestly. But yet bide His time, wait till He reveals Himself. Wait till He calls you by name, testifies that He has forgiven you, that you are His and He yours. And then still wait, think not to enter into all blessedness, or to be perfect at once. "Touch Me not," He said even to Mary Magdalene. He has work for you yet to do, as He had for her. You have yet to receive Him, and to announce His name and power. You have yet perhaps to toil in heaviness and in darkness, but with the memory of His absolution and the expectation of His coming, to console and strengthen you.

Therefore be not too hasty for spiritual consolations and joys: many, by looking too much after these present rewards, have even missed the eternal recompense. They have been disappointed in religion. Desiring always to be touching Jesus;

to be full of the unutterable gladness of such assurance and communion, they have rushed away into some wild extravagance, some delusion of Satan transformed into an angel of light. Or else they have grown discouraged at the labours, and the patience, and the waiting required of them ; at the tasks which Christ by His word or by His ministers has assigned to them as the proper evidence of their repentance, and the necessary preservatives of their first love. They have gradually fallen from their earnestness and fervour, and declined and drooped until they are ready to die.

Let this then be the first rule which we draw from our Easter commemoration. Let us in the spirit of the true penitent, that is, in deep tearful thankful love, believe and resolve that we must seek, and search, and haste after Christ, as it were while it is quite dark, with all our heart and with all our strength. On the other hand, let us equally believe and resolve that we must wait in perfect patience for the fulfilment of His coming, for the spiritual blessings, the resurrection joys, the heavenly consolations, which He has in store, and which He yearns to bestow on all His poor penitents.

So shall we neither miss Him when He comes,

nor presume to think that we need watch no more. We shall be always crying after Him in light and in darkness, in care and in trouble; we shall always be devoted to the work which He appoints us; we shall hear His voice when He calls us; we shall rejoice in His revelations when He shews Himself to us in His resurrection power within us, and then forthwith rise up and renew our haste; and so forgetting that which is behind, and reaching forward toward that which is before, we shall press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus, even the perfect and eternal union with Him in heaven.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN HOLY SCRIPTURE.

ST. LUKE XXIV. 32. *Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and opened the Scriptures?*

THERE is one communion with Christ in solitude. When we are alone, when our hearts are withdrawn from the world, when in such hours we are trying and judging ourselves, when we are mourning over our sins, over our backwardness and deadness, when to relieve ourselves of these heavy burdens of shame and sorrow, we are seeking and searching after Christ with many tears, with all our heart and soul, with earnest eager haste, and at the same time with patient humble watching and waiting, then He reveals Himself to us in the comfortable sense of our forgiveness and reconciliation, in the revival and refreshment of our drooping hearts. When in devout meditation we bring Him as it were near to us, and

seem to behold Him, and to have Him before us, when we hear His voice and hold converse with Him, then have we communion with Christ in solitude.

There is another communion with Christ in society. I do not mean in common or general society, but in the dear and intimate society of good and holy friends, in sincere and devout conversation on holy subjects. We may commune with Christ in our own hearts. We may commune with Him in the society of godly and earnest companions. We may commune with Him in the devout study of holy Scripture.

Let us consider what light is thrown on this subject in the next appearance of our Lord, after that to the holy women, the Magdalene first and the other women afterwards, which is recorded and described in the Gospels, that to the two disciples going to Emmaus; which we considered in another respect on Easter Tuesday.

As they walked they talked together of those things which had happened. They communed one with another and reasoned concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and how they had trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.

Now as they thus communed and reasoned one with another, they found no solution or expla-

nation of the doubts and anxieties which beset them. Neither the words which Jesus had Himself spoken, nor the prophecies and types which spoke of Him throughout the Old Testament, were as yet clear and plain to them. They knew not how to reject, and yet they could not credit or understand the glad and happy tidings. They found a relief in expressing to one another their mutual fears and disquietudes, but yet they could not remove the cloud of sorrow which had overtaken them at our Saviour's crucifixion. Its shadow was still over their souls, although now lit up with some rays of wild and uncertain hope, which appeared at the moment only to deepen and increase the darkness.

Then to these two disciples Jesus drew near, and went with them : but their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.

He begins to question them. By His questions He awakes and increases the yearning of their souls ; He adds intensity to their thought and memory of Himself, and to their anxiety, and desire, and doubtfulness.

Presently He begins to rebuke them for their foolishness, for the dulness and slowness of their faith and understanding. They wondered before that He spake as if He had not heard of the re-

cent events in which He had consummated the mystery of godliness. Now they find that He knows more than they do.

He shews them that every thing which had happened had come to pass under the guidance of God's Almighty hand, and because it ought to do so.

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” Then He begins to discourse with them out of that book which they had learned and known from their childhood, which they imagined (it may be) that they already understood. He begins to reason with them from their Scripture. And now, as soon as He takes the Scriptures into His hand, as soon as He undertakes to expound them, a startling and unexpected glory plays upon them. New lights shine forth from the sacred pages. Blessed meanings break out from the well-known words. Voices more than human, more than angelic, speak to them in the language with which they thought themselves acquainted. Deeps open, and the abysses of God's judgments appear. The veil rends, and the heavenly splendours are seen—the Lamb as it had been slain, His many crowns, His unutterable exaltation, His excellent majesty, His universal dominion, and the pre-

cious aspect, and the beloved countenance, and the tenderness, and the love, and the wounds, which attest that it is the same Jesus.

Yea, the veil on Moses' face is altogether withdrawn, and the eternal counsels of God's providence, and the order of His kingdom are displayed, and the entrance into the Holiest is open in the blood and flesh of Jesus. The heaven of heavens is flinging wide its gates that the saints of God, and the mourners of Jesus, may pass in and abide there.

Jesus opens to them the Scriptures, and glorious and heavenly are the sights and truths, amidst which He conducts them down all the chambers of prophecy in Moses and the Prophets. Their Testament seems to have found a tongue; their Word of God has taken life; it is walking with them; it is speaking to them; it is solving all their doubts; it is dispelling all their sorrows. The shadow of death from the cross which overhung them is turning into the light of everlasting life.

As He speaks their souls kindle, for the chill of bitter disappointment and deep sorrow, the warmth of new life and hope plays in their veins. Their hearts burn.

The revelations vouchsafed to them, the joy

conveyed in them, awakens in their minds an intenser and more ardent longing for new and further revelations, for a deeper insight into the word of God, for a fuller and a perfect manifestation of Jesus. The explanation of the written word increases a hundred fold their yearning after the Living Word.

They constrain Him, saying, Abide with us ; for it is evening, and the day is far spent. They would fain secure His converse for the night.

In this narrative we have a lively representation of communion with Christ in His Scriptures, and in devout and earnest conversation. It teaches us much about Bible reading, and shews us what Bible reading will be profitable.

First of all it shews us what we ought to seek principally and chiefly in our study of holy Scripture, namely, the knowledge of Jesus ; “ for this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” “ Search the scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : they are they which testify of Me.” “ Had ye believed them ye would have believed Me, for they wrote of Me.”

And when we seek the knowledge of Jesus, we should seek to know Him in His relation to ourselves, i. e. as our Redeemer, our Atonement,

and our Life. Therefore in them we must also seek self-knowledge.

Secondly, we see that we shall never thus understand the Scriptures until Jesus takes them into His hand to explain them to us. We shall never find Jesus in them, until He communes with us out of them. As long as He is silent, the Bible does not speak ; as long as He is absent, its words are only a form ; until He comes and joins Himself to us, the Bible is dead. Indeed, as the misuse of good things is most dangerous, the Scriptures without Jesus are necessarily accompanied with a fearful danger. Men will "wrest" them to their own destruction. They will but blind the eyes and harden the heart of the wilful unbeliever ; supply him with a theme for a song, or furnish him with matter for a jest.

If, therefore, you would profit by the study of holy Scripture, or hold communion with Jesus by it, you must evidently adopt and practise these two rules.

(1.) You must study it chiefly for self-improvement in Christ Jesus ; and (2.) You must study it in a prayerful spirit, as needing that Jesus should expound it to you.

Are there not times when our spiritual circumstances are like those of the disciples journeying

to Emmaus. We are perhaps "in heaviness through manifold temptations;" or we have found well-devised and prosperous endeavours in the extension of God's kingdom, and the furtherance of His service, strangely and unexpectedly baffled, and sore humiliation and disappointment meet us where we anticipated consolation and encouragement.

Difficult questions, perhaps of doctrine or of discipline, arise, and we cannot at once discern the true solution. Or anxieties, and despondency concerning the progress and stability of the Church of Christ weigh, it may be, heavily at certain seasons on our hearts.

He ponder over these disquieting subjects; and the shadows increase. The little cloud no bigger than a man's hand rises and extends itself until the sky is covered. We feel as if every thing was unreal, unstable, uncertain. We converse with others on the same matters, and find perhaps that they are involved in the same disappointment and fear. Our communings with our friends appear to augment our confusion and apprehension, and there is no relief to be found in any quarter. Still these musings and ponderings, these devout and anxious conversations, are not without their benefit. They are in fact of

the greatest utility when they seem at the moment most unsatisfactory. We are learning our ignorance and our weakness; we are learning the poverty and the shallowness of the holiest and wisest earthly instructors. God is teaching us that there are profound depths in His judgments and His word which are unfathomable to our dim eyes, perhaps to any created understanding.

He is preparing us for the coming of His uncreated and consubstantial wisdom, for Him in Whom as incarnate were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is making us ready for the visitation of Jesus.

We walk on our way and are sad. We commune with one another and are still sad. We muse, we converse on holy Scripture; we seek for the solution of our difficulties; and our toil is in vain. Our sadness increases; but our hearts are earnestly set upon the truth. We hunt for it as for hid treasures. We are willing, we long to be instructed; our hearts are crying to our God.

Then One comes and joins Himself to us; but our eyes are holden that we should not know Him. "The Lamb as it had been slain, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, with the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth," draws near, and for

us "takes the book out of the right hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne, for He hath prevailed to open it; but as yet His glory is concealed."

As we read we are convinced; as we pray over holy Scripture it begins to address us; a voice appears to issue out of it, and speaks comfortably to us, as the word is to our heart. And first we question with ourselves more carefully and accurately as to the exact cause of our disquietude and sorrow, and we see that it springs from want of faith, from needless distrust, from low and carnal apprehensions of God's purposes.

Then we feel convicted. The voice begins to rebuke us, to upbraid us severely, though in mercy: "for the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

And so indeed we find. The veil seems lifting up we know not how. The book opens. Perhaps some text suddenly solves the long lingering

harassing difficulty. Or the truth comes gradually gathering together out of different pages, from the comparison of the various portions which bear on the subject that disquiets us. This word, this living interpretation of holy Scripture, addresses itself to us more forcibly and comfortably. The Scriptures begin to answer us, and to unfold the meaning of that which has befallen us, or is taking place in the Church, or in the world round about us. Or else they simply testify that the events or the matters in question are inexplicable, and require us to acquiesce in the dispensations of God's providence and love, as all our forefathers in His Church have done. They shew us distinctly that all these things "ought" so to be; and it is enough we learn to rest, and even to rejoice in those things which seem hardest and strangest.

Then our hearts burn, for it is the Lord, although we are not well aware whose grace is sufficient for us, and whose strength is made perfect in our weakness. But the increase of the light revives us; the vanishing of the darkness encourages us. The power of Christ's resurrection is manifest in His word. It influences our heart, it increases our sense of His love. We feel that some One has to do with us who can enter

far enough between our soul and spirit, our joints and marrow, to heal every disease, and cure every lingering doubt, however deep, however inaccessible.

Therefore our hearts burn within us as He walks by us in the way, and opens to us the Scriptures; and by and bye in the breaking of bread or in some other way, He will reveal Himself to us yet more plainly and distinctly. He will assure us of His guidance, and certify us of His instruction, and testify to us that it is His wisdom which leads us; that it is His voice which from behind cries to us according to the promise, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Then after the sure word of prophecy has led us for a season, we shall enter into yet brighter light, and clearer understandings. The "day" will "dawn," and "the day-star arise in our heart." We shall be delivered from all these fears and doubts. "The Lord Himself shall be an everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN ORDINANCES.

ST. LUKE XXIV. 30, 31.—*And it came to pass as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them, and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight.*

THERE is one communion with the risen Saviour in solitude, a second, in the society of devout friends or relatives. There is a third communion with Christ in the services of the sanctuary.

Christ reveals Himself in the relief of the lonely penitent's yearning heart. His sorrow changes into Jesus.

Christ reveals Himself in the interpretation of holy Scripture, and its application to our individual case, as we study it, or commune over it with true friends. It is not a lifeless, but a living word! Our hearts burn. The Bible changes into Jesus.

There is a third communion with Jesus in the services of the sanctuary. In them He vouch-

safes to His servants a third revelation of Himself. They also receive the illumination of His presence. The Lamb as it had been slain appears in the midst of the throne, with His precious wounds shining with unutterable glory, and marking the Mediator of the New Testament, and the blood of sprinkling speaking better things than that of Abel. The service, the liturgy kindles into Jesus.

Each of these communions is nearer and more intimate than that which precedes it. Each such revelation is brighter and more glorious than the one it follows: and they lead on the one to the other, the first conducting to the second, and the second to the third, as Jesus imparts Himself, and the knowledge of Himself, by degrees; and as out of His fulness we receive our new supplies of blessedness, "and grace for grace,"—grace in return for old, fresh gifts of grace for grace already given, and then presented in devout acknowledgment before the Almighty Giver.

We turn again to the gospel record of that revelation of Himself which our Lord vouchsafed to the two disciples journeying towards Emmaus.

He had rebuked them in His mercy, and opened to them the Scriptures, and shewed how it was necessary by them that Christ should suffer

first, and then enter into His glory. Their hearts were burning, although as yet they knew not who was speaking with them. He was moving and drawing them, and beginning to reveal Himself, before they understood the bliss that He was bringing them.

Then when He made as though He would have gone further, they could not bear to lose Him who was testifying to them of Jesus, and unfolding the holy Scriptures, and explaining out of them the counsels of God.

Therefore they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. Jesus loves to be constrained: He longs more to abide with us than we with Him. He was already drawing them to constrain Him, and moving their hearts, that they might desire Him to abide with them.

“And He went in to tarry with them.” And now He cannot (may we so say?) withhold from Himself the delight of revealing Himself. If their hearts are burning within them, surely He must satisfy their zeal.

“And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.”

With what joy must they have started as either

the well-remembered act of blessing, breaking and distributing, or else the power of the bread which He gave them, dispersed the mists which as yet lingered between them and their consolation !

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.”

And behold, as they recognised Him, He was gone. “He vanished out of their sight.” Then they knew who had been speaking with them, and instructing them. Then they discovered why their hearts had been burning.

“And they rose up the same hour,”—forgetful of their food, of their rest, of the darkening evening, of the approach of night,—full only of the joyful and amazing discovery.

“And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.”

Then they also “told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”

In the breaking of bread, in the worship of the congregation, they found the Saviour. Jesus

revealed Himself to them. He was there, and they saw Him not, or knew not that it was He. Then He revealed Himself, their eyes were opened, and they knew their joy.

How different is the aspect of the Christian services, as soon as our eyes are opened, from what it has hitherto been!

What a change is it from Luz to Bethel! The patriarch Jacob beheld the sun go down; its light lingered on the walls of Luz; the cold gray rocks were about him; the quiet hills surrounded him; the shadows of evening stretched out over him; night rose over the sky; the stones were his pillow, and he slept; all looked of the earth, earthy. He awakes. How great a change has passed over the landscape! "How dreadful is this place," he cries; "surely God was in it, and I knew it not. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He had dreamed, and his dream was truer than his waking. "Behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it." All is now of heaven, heavenly.

What caused the change? The altar of God. It was Bethel, the house of God, where his forefather Abraham had worshipped, and where he

had reared the altar of the Lord, and offered up his sacrifices^a.

Yes, the vision of faith is truer and more real than the objects of our sight. It seems to the worldly as a dream,—even to the believer it is no more for a season; but it has indeed substance, which increases in the distinctness of its features, the vividness of its colours, the magnificence of its objects, till, from the shadowy image of a “land that is very far away,” resting mist-like on the horizon, it grows into “the Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” with the “innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, God the judge of all, the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling speaking better things than that of Abel.”

Thus, when faith is brought to bear on the services and worship of the sanctuary, they assume a very different character and aspect from that which they had before. Till God enlightens our understanding, they are only a form. However well arranged or celebrated, they address themselves merely to the taste or intellect: they are

^a Gen. xii. 7, 8; xiii. 4.

of the earth, earthy. The church may be stately and beautiful ; the service, the music, the preaching, the liturgy, may all be admirable ; but the building is only a mass of stones, and the worship only an assemblage of sounds, until our eyes are opened from above. Our taste may be gratified, our eyes and ears may be pleased, but our hearts will be unmoved until God vouchsafes us the grace of spiritual discernment.

Even in the Holy Communion we shall find nothing more than a form, and show, and ceremony, imposing, perhaps, and touching, but not heart-stirring or improving.

Without the gift of God opening our eyes, all must be of the earth, earthy. As that grace is imparted, whether it is given us by degrees, so that it grows with our growth, and ripens with our maturity, or whether, after years of frivolity and folly, it is poured upon us more suddenly, in repentance and conversion, the alterations which it produces in our view of holy ordinances and services is amazing and unspeakable.

“Where two or three are met together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.” Then we cry out in our hearts with Jacob, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.”

We have been in the same church, joined in the same services, repeated the same words, Sunday after Sunday. But we went without preparation, we worshipped without awe and reverence, we returned without a blessing. But now our hearts burn as we are treading the well-known path. We hold our breath as we enter. We bow our knees in deep humility before the services begin. We pour out our hearts in the confessions and prayers. We unite with zeal and fervour in the holy psalmody. We hearken to the word as to messages from heaven. Whence is this great change? We have found out that the Lord is there.

We have discovered in His house "the altar of our God," the altar on which we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, body, soul and spirit, the altar whereof we have a right to eat, the altar where One offers Himself for us and to us, who is the life of the world, and the light of men, the holy table where we join the Lamb's marriage feast, that we entering in may sup with Him and He with us.

There was again, as we found, the upper chamber, and the holy assembly of apostles, and the Lord desiring with desire, that we should join their feast. His hand took the elements and blessed them. His

hand brake the bread and poured out the wine: His voice said, Take eat, this is My Body; and drink ye this, for this is My Blood. His words made the poor earthly creatures to become unto us His most precious Flesh and Blood. His death was shewed forth before us, not as it was exhibited on Calvary, amidst execrations and yells, angry faces, and fierce scoffing gestures, with darkening skies, and quaking earth, and rending rocks, and opening graves, and the multitude smiting on their breasts in horror; but as St. John beheld it, as it is in the heaven of heavens, amidst the hosannas of saints and the jubilant hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim, and the universal adoration of the innumerable multitude; and the unutterable glory of the excellent Majesty streams from every feature and every wound of the Lamb as It had been slain, where the eyes of the eternal Father rest, in the unspeakable Divine complacency, on the one continual, all-sufficient sacrifice of the eternal Son; and the ineffable love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is gathered in the Body of Jesus, as in the centre point of their adorable dispensations, and reveals itself in the most touching colours, in the tenderest aspect, with the sweetest voice, with the softest and most persuasive invita-

tions, in those precious wounds, in that pleading blood.

Then our eyes are opened, and in the breaking of bread we know the Lord. We know who has been with us, and who is with us. We recognise Him whom we have been praying and constraining to abide with us, by attendance at this holy sacrament, according to that most gracious promise implied in those comforting words, "Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." Our doubts are solved, or else cease to disquiet us. Our difficulties disappear in the revelation of Christ's love. We cast ourselves entirely upon it. We lose ourselves in it, and are at rest. We are assured that whatever terrible enigmas may surround us in this wild world, how loud soever the sound of the strife may be where we wrestle, not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, yet there is One who has the words of eternal life, who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," who hath promised that not a hair of our head shall perish, who will embrace us and carry us when we are ready to sink; who has pledged Himself to be our light and life, to abide with us, and

we with Him, to be One with us, and we with Him.

This is one great gain from frequent and regular communion. It quiets our minds. It enlightens our understanding, for it brings before us continually the ineffable love of Jesus. It brings it before us as our portion and inheritance. "The love of the Lord passeth all things for illumination."

Once assured of His love, and we become filled with it. It kindles our love in return. "We love Him, because He first loved us," and so it unites Him to us, and us to Him. For "they that are joined to the Lord are one Spirit," and this is the spirit which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and which never faileth.

There is no surer rule for solving doubts, or learning to bear burdens, or for composing our hearts under difficulties, or for enduring patiently in the midst of trouble and darkness, than to be a regular and frequent communicant. In the breaking of bread our eyes are opened, and we see it is the Lord who is with us, feeding, cleansing, refreshing us.

"How dreadful is this place!" Yes, the altar of God is in it. "This is none other than the

house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Such is our view of the Church, its services, its liturgies, and especially of its Holy Communion, when God has opened our eyes with the gift of spiritual discernment.

Through the open gate of heaven, out of God's house on earth, we look on into His glorious house in heaven, "the place where His honour dwelleth." The majesty, the light, the goodness, the very love which fill it, its order, its harmony, its peace and joy overwhelm us, and strike us down in amazement and awe, and make us exclaim, How dreadful! But then the gate is not shut against us. He who is within, the centre of that radiance and glory, does not reject us. His voice, and the voice of the Spirit, and the voice of the Bride, the Church, is not "Depart from Me," but Come! "Come unto Me thou that labourest and art heaven laden." "Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

While, therefore, awe and alarm, and the overwhelming sense of our sinfulness, would repel us, as unworthy men to gather up the crumbs under God's table, yet the invitation and call of Christ, the abounding mercy and love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, reassure us. We feel there is

nowhere else where we can betake ourselves, no one else to whom we can go. We feel that it is His call and invitation bringing us out of the highways and hedges as poor needy beggars, and compelling us to come,—that it is His love arraying us in the best robe, the garment of His righteousness, which alone entitles us to an entrance.

The love of Christ constrains us, His love for us, His desire that we should enter in and sup with Him at the great Passover feast. This is the overpowering and constraining motive which swallows up our alarm and fear. He says, Come; for all that we have been, for all that we are, He still says, Come. “Do this in remembrance of Me.” How should we reject the gracious invitation, His yearning and fervent desire for our presence.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness through the Blood of Jesus to enter into the holiest by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His Flesh, and having an High-Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”

Let us lift up our hearts thus high, even to

the heaven of heavens, even to the throne and the Lamb as it had been slain, where we sing with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven. The gate into it is here, for here also is the house and the altar of the Lord.

And what if, as soon as He has revealed Himself to us, He vanishes out of our sight; if He withdraws the sensible tokens of His presence, the enlargement and outpouring of our heart, the spiritual peace and joy which for the moment He vouchsafed to us; yet the taste will remain, even the sweetness of the bread of life, and the purification, and the enlightenment, and the strength thence derived will still be ours. We shall become patient under our burden, we shall acquiesce in God's providence, we shall commit ourselves cheerfully to His guidance, we shall leave in spirit house and home, and all things of earth, that we may hasten to the assembly of His saints, and to His house eternal in the heavens, where, as if heaven itself were not good enough for us, He is preparing a place for us; assured that if He goes and prepares a place for us, it is only that He may "come again to take us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also."

If you would learn to anticipate that meeting, if you would teach yourselves to be always waiting for it, if you would fain be able, when the Lord saith, Behold I come quickly, to answer with the apostle, Even so come; then do you now, when the Lord invites you to Himself, when He calls you continually to Him in the Holy Communion, make it your constant practice to come. Come whensoever He now vouchsafes to summon you, that you may be amongst those to whom He shall again say Come, "Come ye blessed children of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

Only let us carefully remember that as Christ opens our eyes to the greatness of our Christian privileges, and admits us into the inner Sanctuary, He calls us to deeper and truer devotion, and to a holier and stricter life. When Moses had been in the mount with God, his face shone. When we have been in intimate communion with Him, our lives should shine. We cannot be too careful to observe an exact consistency of conduct. We must be most diligent in self-examination, and adherence to our holy rule of conduct, that the inner life may not be neglected, that we may never rest in the ordinances, or in the feelings

which they awaken. We must be most watchful to give no offence, and to provide things honest in the sight of all men.

By frequency and by devotion in church, in worship, in Holy Communion, we become in some measure the salt of the earth; and the lamps lit in a dark place; and the city set upon a hill. Men will look at and speak of us, however we may avoid their eyes or tongues. Therefore let us take good heed that our inner and outer life both agree thoroughly and completely with these our religious practices.

Then shall Christ indeed dwell in us and we in Him. That is, our inner and outward life will both be full of Christ. They will in a measure resemble His,—and we shall be as servants who wait for the coming of their Lord.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN HIS CHARGES
LAID ON US.

ST. JOHN XXI. 15. *Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep.*

CHRIST reveals Himself in solitude; He re- reveals Himself in devout society; He reveals Himself in the great congregation. He appears to the lonely penitent; He appears to the religious friends; He appears to the assembled disciples. He grants us to hold communion with Him by the sweet peace of merciful absolution and reconciliation, and restoration to His life and love. He grants us to hold communion with Him by the unfolding of holy Scriptures, and the interpretation of prophecies, and the turning

of our hearts, which His instructions occasion. He grants us to hold communion with Him in the services of the Church, and especially at the celebration and reception of the Sacrament of His most precious Body and Blood.

These are revelations which He vouchsafes to all His disciples. It seems needful that we should enjoy them in order to be saved.

But He has also special revelations of Himself, as in rebuke for unbelief, such as He vouchsafed to St. Thomas, and again, for and in the communication of offices and charges. Thus in the evening of the resurrection-day He appeared to the ten disciples, that He might speak to them Peace, and say, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you;" that He might breathe on them, and say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Then, again, He appeared to the eleven, as they sat at meat, and after upbraiding them for their slowness of heart, He gave them the commandment, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And again, before His ascension into heaven, in the mountain of Galilee, He appeared to the eleven, and bade them Go and teach all nations, bap-

tizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

And in the history from which my text is taken, probably on some day just preceding, or just following, (for this appearance also occurred in Galilee,) He shewed Himself to seven apostles, and revealed Himself in a peculiar manner to two among them,—to the one who loved Him much, and the other whom He loved most; to St. Peter and St. John at the sea of Tiberias; and then also He gave to St. Peter the charge mentioned in my text,—the charge thrice enforced upon him, Feed My sheep, Feed My lambs, Feed My sheep.

Indeed, in the miraculous draught of fishes, by which He revealed Himself to His disciples, He had already reminded them, and St. Peter in particular, of the charge which He had previously bestowed on them,—the charge that they should be fishers of men, and catch men; and had symbolically prophesied of the great eventual success of their, and of the whole Christian, ministry.

One purpose, therefore, of several of our blessed Saviour's appearances after His resurrection, was to commit certain charges and offices to His disciples, and special charges to individuals among them.

And He communed with them, and they with Him, in the bestowal and reception of these charges, and He revealed Himself under gracious and merciful aspects in these blessed communions with His disciples, touching the duties which He laid upon them.

In breathing upon them, that He might communicate to them the gift of the Spirit for their ministry, He shewed that the Holy Ghost proceeded from Him as from the Father, and from the Father by Him ; and that it was His Spirit, and He the incarnate Son of God by that Spirit, who should work all things in the Church. He revealed Himself as the fountain of grace, the one only fountain of grace opened for all mankind. He revealed Himself as with His disciples always, even to the end of the world, that in and by their ministrations He might extend and continue His own ministrations to all ages and to all nations.

He shewed plainly and distinctly that such an extension and continuance was, and would always be, necessary for the maintenance and completion of His work, and therefore that an ordained and consecrated ministry was, and would also be always, necessary, in order to the rearing and building, and finishing of that holy temple of

living souls, His Church, built up on Himself as the sole foundation, and thenceforth, through these ministrations, which, in effect, are His, growing with the increase of God.

Furthermore, He also shewed us at these revelations of Himself, in communicating and assigning charges to particular disciples, and by the way in which it pleased Him to commit them, what those tempers and feelings are with which those to whom He commits them, should receive the solemn responsibility thus laid upon them; and yet again, in the particular record from which the text is taken, He teaches us that He has different works for different servants, and that He adapts in general the various works which He assigns them, to the disposition, temper, and character which He has bestowed on them, brought out and perfected, and sanctified by grace, but not abolished or annihilated.

Let us apply these considerations practically. Christ has gracious purposes for us all. He is that Lord who hath divided His substance among His servants, and hath set every man His work, and hath appointed a day in which He will reckon with us.

We must not hide our talent in the napkin, or bury it in the ground. We must not forget

Christ's work, neither must we misuse or neglect the opportunities and graces which He has given us. Yet how apt are we to do so. How many seem to live as if they were their own masters. How many seem to regard all that they have, and their talents, their time, their life, the very gifts and privileges of the Church and the gospel, as if they were their own possession and property. The only thing which the multitude regard as not their own, is exactly the only thing which they have of their own, viz. their sin. This is their own indeed; but this they lay off on others, on the world, on their circumstances, even, indeed, on God. All else they regard as belonging to themselves, when all else is wholly God's. Christ, my brethren, would disabuse us of this ruinous mistake, and how much has He to do before we will be undeceived!

Has He then visited thee in mercy? Has He come to thee in His resurrection power? Has He hasted greatly to keep and preserve thee from thy childhood, to nourish and cherish thee in thy boyhood, to rear thee amid devotions, and in godliness and holiness? Has He saved thee from the fearful sins of youth into which so many plunge? Has He kept thee from the tempter under the shadow of His wings, when a thousand

fell beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand? Or has He, after humbling and afflicting thee, after convincing thee of thy sin and misery, and teaching thee to pour out thy whole heart in penitent confession and deep humiliation, returned to thee with His absolution and forgiveness? Has He met thee in thy lonely contrite watchings, and named thee by name, and testified that thou art His? Has He shewn thee that He is thine, and that thou art His? Has He spoken peace to thee, and hushed and composed thee with a sense of His encompassing and wakeful love? Has He then taught and instructed thee by His Word and ministry, and opened His Scriptures, and revealed Himself to thee in His Word, and made thy heart burn, and thy spirit pant after Him? Has He come to thee again in the solemn assembly, and manifested Himself to thee in the breaking of bread, and fed and nourished, and enlightened thee in holy services and sacraments?

Has He not then something for thee to do? Has He shewn thee such special marks of mercy and regard, bestowed upon thee such signal compassions, raised thee from such falls, revived thee from so deep a death, thus "allured thee into the wilderness, and pleaded with thee face

to face," thus shewed thee His watchful tenderness, His amazing, all-embracing love?

Has He not then some special services, which He looks for at thy hands, some particular commissions with which He may entrust thee? some gracious charge which He may lay upon thee?

I speak not of the pastoral office, or of the high and glorious apostleships, which in such ways, and after such preparations, He committed to St. Peter and St. Paul. Surely even for the ministry, and for all its offices, from the highest to the lowest, such calls, such stirs of heart, such invitations, such revelations of Jesus, are one proper preparation. It is thus that the Lord would lay on us the solemn but glorious necessity, as the apostle names it, so that we must cry out, Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel. Ah, what a "threefold cord," "not quickly broken," did the Saviour bind around St. Peter's heart by the triple question and the triple charge! How did He fasten him by it to His pastoral office, through every conflict and affliction, even unto death!

Surely in that question, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" which the Lord addressed to His apostle, all his communion with Jesus, and all his confession of Jesus, and all the works

and words of Jesus, and all the past services which he had rendered to Jesus, and all the past commissions which he had received from Jesus, yea, and all his whole love for Jesus, rose up before him in all its length, and breadth, and height; he dares not say that he loves Him more than others; but he feels that he does love Him. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." It was part of the appointed preparation. Immediately the charge is given—"Feed My sheep."

But the gracious Saviour is not yet satisfied; He has not yet stirred His disciple's soul to its deepest and innermost recesses. He must pierce it "even to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow."

He asks the question thrice. At the third time, not his love only for Christ, but Christ's love for him, and his need, his dependence on Christ's love, open before him. Yes, Christ's love appears before him in its far greater, its infinite breadth and length, and depth and height; his presumption, his fall, his threefold denial, the look that dissolved him into tears, his flight from the hall of Caiaphas, his bitter tears, the prayer which prevailed for him, the love which recovered him, the hand which drew him not now out of the stormy waters of earth,

but out of the deeper and more terrible billows of despair and hell, which must otherwise have drowned him; this love searching through him, and knowing him when he knew not himself, because it knoweth all things; this love, on which alone a man can cast himself with safety, was what now troubled and grieved him by its very vastness and infinitude, and the necessary nothingness of man's love in comparison. This love now unfolded itself before him at the third repetition of the question, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." I knew not myself then; I thought then I would go with Thee to prison and death; and that though all men should, yet I never should deny Thee. Thou knewest better. Thou knewest that without Thee I must perish; that I hung upon Thee, and that Thou alone couldst preserve me; that my love toward Thee was Thy gift—the effluence and reflection of Thy love toward me. All that I have of myself is my sin; all that I have of grace or love for Thee is Thy gift. But Thou knowest that Thou hast not withheld this best gift. Lord, Thou knowest all things—Thou knowest that I love Thee: and thus the preparation of the apostle's heart is completed,

and he is ready for the charge—the charge nearest and dearest (may we so say ?) to the Saviour's own heart—the pastoral office ; for it is His own, as His words indeed signify—"Feed My Sheep."

Now, without being priests or ministers of Christ, there are many ways in which you may obtain and share the blessings of the office.

A father or mother may be Christ's shepherd for their children ; an elder brother or sister may be Christ's shepherd to their younger brethren ; an earnest and devoted young man or woman may be Christ's shepherd to their associates and companions in the same sphere of life ; a farmer or a tradesman may be Christ's shepherd to the labourers or artizans whom he employs ; a householder may be so to his servants. One may become a teacher in schools, another may help in the choir, another may devote himself to collections for the Church's missionary work. Even the sick man or woman, confined by long lingering disorders to a melancholy chamber or a painful bed, may be Christ's shepherd for those who attend upon him, and nurse the hearts of those who nurse his body.

And if Christ, who appeared not to all, but only to His chosen witnesses, has chosen thee

to manifest Himself to thee, and has called thee thus to bear witness to His resurrection, power, and love, take heed that thou reject not His call. At this time, surely, we should think how much He has suffered, how much He has done for us; how much, like St. Peter, we owe to His intercession and His prayer for us. And is there nothing which we can do in His service?

He has appointed to every man his work. He has assigned thee thine. Be sure that thou fulfil it, lest thou shouldst be rejected, like Judas, and another take thy office.

See here, too, also the qualifications required for the fulfilment of these offices of love. A zeal for Christ; but not only a zeal for Christ, but a true love for Christ,—for Christ Himself; Christ in His true character; Christ, whose kingdom is not of this world; Christ, whose throne here is the Cross, and Whom we must, if need be, follow to the Cross, and Whom we cannot follow except by the Cross.

For not only must we have a love for Christ, but there must be a deep humility, an entire renunciation of all self-confidence, a true and contrite remembrance of our sinfulness, a total and complete self-surrender, a thorough casting away of all self-seeking.

Therefore, yet again, we must have, as the prime motive of all, a deep, and overwhelming, and intense, and, as it were, a painful sense of Christ's love for us, such as broke out in St. Peter's heart at the Saviour's third question.

In it He, as it were, bade the apostle count up the cost. "Thou didst not count it up sufficiently in time past. Therefore, when the trial came, thou didst even shrink from imaginary terrors. Hast thou counted it up now?"

Yes, he had now counted it up; and he felt it, and Christ knew it; for He knew the power of His own prayer and love for His apostle. St. Peter now felt that, in the sense of Christ's love, which had raised him from his threefold fall, he had a motive which could never fail, a flame of love which many waters could not quench, a "love strong as death," a zeal, a holy "jealousy deep as the grave." He could now be faithful unto death, even His Master's death, the death of the cross, because he had exchanged his strength for Christ's, and, instead of resting on himself, now rested on the love of Jesus.

Thus, whensoever thou undertakest any office for Christ's sake, and at Christ's call, whether it be the ministry, or the mission, or the charge of education, or the service assigned thee by some

minister of Christ's Church, or the care of thy own children, or watchfulness over thy servants ; or the setting an example to neighbours and to companions, there is no return or escape for thee then. A "necessity is laid upon" thee. "Woe unto thee" if thou ceaseest from thy charge.

Therefore we should count up the cost before we begin. We should intend to go through with the good practices which we have begun. We should at the same time receive all such charges as commissions from Christ—as gracious marks and tokens of His love. We should also consider, that whatsoever zeal, or fervour, or love for Him we have, is His gift ; that no amount of such devotion gives us licence to sin ; that we must not take these callings on ourselves, but receive them from the appointed hands to which Christ has delegated His power. We must remember, that as zeal, and fervour, and love, are His gifts, they may at any time be taken from us, and will be taken from us, if we do not use them aright. Then will the love of Christ abide in us, according to His promise, and constrain us always to all perseverance and faithfulness.

Further, in order that we may really fulfil these offices to the good of our souls, we must remember that we must always attend to them.

Very often we shall have many grievous disappointments to encounter. Our labours of love may be strangely baffled. In the midst of them strange and unexpected temptations may meet us ; the fear of men may shake us, as for a little while it did St. Peter, when in after times he consented to the hypocritical converted Jews for a season.

Perseverance, therefore, will be necessary ; and for perseverance, patience ; and for patience, unwearied and abounding prayer.

When our Saviour had given St. Peter His thrice-repeated charge, He warned him presently of His cross, as if He had said, " Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

We must not break off such good practices when we have once begun them, or relapse gradually into a lower and worldly way of life.

We must always be labouring to abound more and more, or else we shall always be in danger of thus relapsing. You remember how strict St. Paul was with himself, bruising his body and keeping it in subjection, lest by any means when he had preached unto others, he himself should be a cast-away.

There is but one safe rule, viz. that of the

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same apostle, "forgetting that which is behind, and reaching forward toward that which is before, I press toward the mark for the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus." Let us not rest until the victory is won. Let us not relax until we have reached the mark.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN RECEIVING HIS BLESSING.

ST. LUKE xxiv. 50, 51. *And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*

WE have considered how the several appearances recorded of our Lord, after His resurrection, explain to us the various spiritual visitations and revelations of Himself, which He vouchsafes to His faithful disciples everywhere and in all ages. We have now reached the last manifestation, with which He closed His forty days' sojourn upon earth, when, having led them out from Jerusalem as far as to Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them, before He, being parted from them, ascended up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

And this is the end of all our communings with Jesus, and the fruit of every revelation of

Himself which He vouchsafes to us, even a blessing, a new blessing, an increase of blessedness, every time that He visits us, and we receive Him.

If He comes to us in penitent and contrite watchings, in sorrowful and lonely humiliations, with pardon, and forgiveness, and absolving mercy, it is that when He departs He may leave with us the blessedness of the reconciled, of those whose iniquity is pardoned, and whose sin is covered.

If He communes with us out of holy Scripture, if He rebukes and chastens us in that Word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, if He searches our hearts and exposes their defects, and upbraids their unbelief with the illumination of His glorious gospel, if He makes our hearts to burn and glow within us by these His solemn discourses, His merciful instructions, His tender expostulations or pathetic chidings, it is that when He departs He may leave with us the blessedness of those who are enlightened and taught patience by Christ's law, who have found a lantern for their feet, a light for their path, a staff for their hand, with which they may pass safely through the dim and obscure passages of their pilgrimage.

If He reveals Himself to us in the breaking of bread, and bestows Himself upon us in holy Sacraments, it is that when the feast has been kept, He may remain and abide with us in the sweet savour of the bread of life, nourishing and supporting us with His goodness, turning into spiritual strength, and the supply of every want within us, and giving us the blessedness of hearts composed and stayed upon God, dwelling in Christ and Christ in them, made one with Christ and Christ with them.

If He visits us to give us some special and peculiar call and charge, full perhaps of deep responsibility and infinite anxiety, it is that laying this solemnly upon us, He may accompany it with a blessing, a new and deep blessedness, given as a peculiar portion to His Josephs, his dear and favoured children, out of that inheritance which He purchased with His sword and bow in His great battle-strife with Satan, a larger measure, a five times so great abundance, of the viands from the marriage supper of the Lamb, which He selects for His Benjamins, the children of the right hand of His Father, His chosen and beloved brethren, whom He purposes to use, by whom He means to work, through whom He intends to foster and feed

His sheep and lambs in the "cloudy and dark day."

At every return of Jesus, if we receive Him aright, He leaves a blessing behind Him. To every one of His visitations its special and peculiar blessing is attached. Therefore, at the close of His forty days' sojourn upon earth after His resurrection, when about to be parted from them and taken up into heaven, He, having led them out as far as Bethany, lifts up His hands and blesses them, and as He blesses them is parted from them. He sums up all blessings in that concluding blessing, He leaves them in His ascension the mantle of His blessedness, to remain with them and rest upon them, as they succeed into His place. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you:" so had He promised. "These things," He had said, have I spoken to you, "that My joy may abide in you, and that your joy may be full."

Yes, the mantle of His peace, and joy, and blessedness fell off (so to speak), and remained upon them at His ascension, to be their support and stay, to throw its beautiful light back over the whole mystery of His earthly sojourn and death, and illuminate all His words and works with divine glory, and to make them also look

forward and yearn and pant for His promised return, and at the same time to expect it with calm, assured confidence and patience, knowing that all the promises of God are in Him, Yea and Amen, certain and most sure, and irrevocable and unalterable.

And so, after their eyes could no more follow Him, and the angel had spoken to them of His second coming, "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing and praising God."

As we advance on through our Easter communications toward the glorious celebration day of our Saviour's Ascension, let us consider this comfortable truth; let us call to mind that we were called for a gracious purpose, even "to inherit a blessing;" that Christ's purpose in visiting us is "to bless us, in turning us away every one from his iniquities;" that God's gracious will and desire is to bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; to give us no earthly or narrow and vanishing good, but blessedness; His own peace, His own joy, the peace and the joy of the beloved Son God, that so we may at last "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we

may be filled with all the fulness of God." Ah, what unutterable blessedness !

Secondly, let us remember that it is the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, the Angel of the everlasting covenant, who brings and confers, or rather who is the blessing and the blessedness, thus bestowed upon us.

In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and goodness, and of His fulness (cries St. John) have we all received, and grace for grace, new grace after and in return for grace already given.

Christ the Blessed, the Son of the Blessed, is the one appointed and anointed channel, through whom, from the fountain of all blessedness, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, the various blessings which we need, or which God showers, are derived and flow into us. In and through Him, as the incarnate Saviour, the one Mediator, the head of the Church, must every good gift and every perfect gift pass into His Body, from "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

His visitations therefore bring or are, the blessings which we need, or which God rains freely on us; and every time that He comes to us

He comes with a special blessing, for "His mercies fail not, they are new every morning."

Therefore, thirdly, if we are conscious of any visitations from Christ Jesus, if He comes to us and reveals Himself to us, if He answers the thoughts and desires of our hearts, if He addresses us in our hearts, or by His ministers, or looks out upon us from His Scriptures, and speaks to us by His Word, or if He refreshes and enlightens us by His Holy Communion, or if He vouchsafes us special calls, and lays solemn and tender charges, and special duties and offices upon us, let us believe, and be most entirely convinced and assured, that when He has come to us thus, He has come to us with a blessing; and if our consciences testify that we have received Him aright, that we have put no obstacle in the way of His grace by wilful sin, or shewn resistance to His calls or biddings, then let us have the same inviolable, and unshaken, and immoveable conviction, that we have received and are in possession of the blessing, the choice heavenly blessing which He has brought for us, the blessing which we so much need, and which He in His holy Word, that Word which cannot lie, has linked and inseparably joined with these His gracious visitations.

Thus, have we been aroused and awakened to our sinfulness, and our sins ; have we been taught and drawn to “ consider our ways ; ” have we examined, and tried, and sifted our lives and our doings, our words and our thoughts, by the rule of God’s commandments ?

Have we never done so before, and been hardly and sorely constrained to do so by some heavy trial and affliction, some dangerous sickness, or terrible bereavement, or startling alarm of conscience ?

We review the mournful past ; it is all full of shame, and darkness, and filthiness, and rottenness, and death. We cannot discern or call to mind half our sins ; we cannot distinguish the extreme and manifold guiltiness of each particular transgression ; we can only see that they are more in number than the hairs of our head, and each in its dim gigantic proportions, hideous and horrible.

Then does Christ in His mercy come to us, tender and very pitiful, not upbraiding, but with tears in His eyes, love in His looks, mercy in His hands, with all His precious wounds and blood speaking to us, and pleading for us ? Does He in gentle tender accents call us by name, offer to blot out as a cloud our transgressions, and as

a thick cloud our sins? Does He exhibit His cross, and His thorns, and His anguish, and His blood, and His death, before us, and tell us that these were meant for us, that He intended them for us, that the Father prepared them for our needs, that we have them still freely and fully in all their blessed effects?

Does He call us only to confess these transgressions which so appal us, to the best of our power, naming them by name as well as we can, and taking to ourselves the shame which they deserve; or if we cannot quiet our own conscience, to impart them freely and without reserve to those whom He has commissioned to receive these acknowledgments?

When we have done so, does He speak peace to us: does He whisper to us in our hearts, or does He say to us by the lips of His ministers, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee; go and sin no more?" Does He address, and direct, and bring home to thy heart the sentence of forgiveness daily read in church? Does He, in the way which seems good to Him, impart to thee His absolution, His forgiveness of thy sins, freely, fully, unconditionally, in order that thou mayest be at peace, and give thyself up to Him in return freely, fully, unconditionally, and love

Him much, having so much forgiven? Then be persuaded of thy blessedness: yea, receive it and believe it as an article of the faith. Hold fast the assurance of thy forgiveness, and the consequent blessing. Let no scoffers rob thee of it: let not Satan scare thee out of it. Let not the world, nor thy own weakness, nor thy returning temptations, nor any power in earth or hell, tear it from thee. It is thine. It is God's gift. It is Christ's purchase. It is assured to thee by His word, and heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall not pass away.

And when Christ withdraws, when, having lifted up His hands, and blessed thee with His forgiveness, He is parted from thee, and carried up to heaven: and when darkness and heaviness return, as return they will, then still believe that the blessing is thine, that it remains with thee, and will not be taken from thee, except thou shalt fling it away—for “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

But, remember, that it is the blessing of Christ which has been given thee, a large, and abounding, and ever-increasing blessing, extending on into infinity, enduring on into eternity, even the blood of Christ, which can cleanse from

all sin, and wash the robes of the saints of God clean, and white, and stainless.

And thou must ever be seeking for the increase of this blessing, and its more effectual operation in thy heart; so, and so only, shalt thou never lose it.

Therefore, if Christ revisits thee again, and speaks to thee anew, and reveals Himself to thee afresh, in thy doubts, or fears, or difficulties; if He communes with thee by the way, and unfolds the Scripture to thee, then again, believe and be persuaded that the hand of the Spirit is leading thee—that Christ, the Good Shepherd of the sheep, is drawing thee, to follow Him by it; and be at peace.

Let us believe, that the illumination of the Holy Ghost shines on the pathway of life eternal, sufficiently to shew us what step we must take next; and let us be assured without hesitation, or doubt, that if we take that step, the blessing, the unspeakable blessing of Christ's increasing instruction and guidance, is, and will evermore be ours. Then shall we waste no more time in disquieting and vexing our soul. We shall at once be up and doing. We shall take each step which Christ opens before us, and up which He leads us, the moment that He presents it to us:

and so we shall always hear His voice, and follow Him, and none shall pluck us out of His hand.

In this calm, simple, childlike confidence, there is indeed unbounded blessedness.

“Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

Thus the blessing of absolution and forgiveness shall expand into the blessing of spiritual wisdom. The comings of Christ shall bring it us.

Then we need strength; to take those steps thus set before us, to hold fast the assurance of pardon, to repel the assaults of the enemy, to obey without hesitation the promptings of that heavenly wisdom, we need strength.

Jesus comes with it. He comes with it in His resurrection power, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength.

“All power,” He says, “is given unto Me in heaven and earth.” And that power is ours by His blessing.

This is the especial blessing of Holy Communion. Thus He is the bread which cometh down from heaven, for the strengthening and

refreshing of our soul. Hence His Flesh is meat indeed, and His Blood drink indeed : meat and drink indeed, which can nourish and support us in our toilsome passage through the wilderness of life, which can strengthen and revive us in our sore strife with sin.

Come not to the holy Eucharist, without believing, that every time thou takest a blessing away with thee, even this special blessing of spiritual strength. Christ comes to us in that Communion ; not to go away again and forsake us ; but when His apparent revelation of Himself is withdrawn, still to abide with us, as He says, "to dwell in us, and we in Him," to be made one with us, and we with Him.

Let us then believe and be persuaded, with the same unshaken and unalterable conviction, that after every Communion His blessing remains upon us, to stablish, strengthen, settle us ; that He who came to be in us as a fountain of cleansing grace, and who continues to be in us a fountain of illuminating grace, does and will also abide in us as a fountain of strengthening grace ; that grace after grace, and blessing after blessing, does and will flow out of His infinite fulness, to bear us like a swelling, deepening, mighty river,

on at last into the infinite ocean of His life, and joy, and blessedness.

Thus let us always be convinced, that Christ comes to bless us, to shower blessings upon us, new, and varied, and glorious, and boundless blessings; and let us always be assured that these remain with us after His visitations are over; and let us understand that each blessing has a twofold purpose; first, to undo all evil, and confirm every good in our past life; and secondly, for the future, to be an earnest and foretaste to us of better things to come. There will therefore be comfort in it for the past, and promise in it for the future.

Thus shall we be delivered from that spiritual sloth and false irresolution, by which so many souls are ruined. If we keep dwelling too much upon our feelings, and doubting and questioning whether we have profited by the means of grace, that indecision and inactivity will increase. Our fearfulness and lukewarmness will seem to us humility and self-distrust. We shall shrink from venturing any thing for Christ's sake, or from committing ourselves to a devout and holy way of life. "I shall not," we shall say, "be able to act up to such professions. I shall not be able

to overcome temptations readily and easily. It may be that I shall fall before them. It will, therefore, be better for me to delay attendance at the means of grace, and to put off my acceptance of Christ's gracious calls." Thus men not unfrequently argue themselves into coldness, and reason themselves into deadness, from a want of real belief in Christ's gracious promises, and do at last abstain from the means of grace altogether.

Or, on the other hand, forgetting that any blessing has really been bestowed on them, they at last learn to rest merely in formal attendance and formal service. They will not remember that the "manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." They do not consider that Christ blesses us in order that we may be always yearning for and obtaining new blessings—that "he that eateth shall yet be hungry, and he that drinketh shall yet be thirsty."

For after all, the more of these blessings and this blessedness that we receive, the more deeply and devoutly shall we feel, that here, at last, we are still absent from the Lord: that the blessedness given us is not of this world, or of our present life, but a golden cord let down out of

heaven, to draw up our hearts thitherward. Here, Christ's visitations are, as it were, for a moment. Before we can embrace His feet, or name His name, behold, He is already gone, He is already parted from us, and ascending up to heaven. But we perceive, that as He goes He blesses us, and at every visitation and departure we experience a new blessing; and this comforts us; so we return to Jerusalem with fresh joy, and are continually in the temple of His Church, praising and blessing God, and awaiting in patience, but in earnest hope, that second perfect Advent of our Saviour, when out of the place which He is now preparing for us, He shall come again, with the last crowning blessing in His hands, and take us by it to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ASCENSION DAY.

CHRIST THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

ST. JOHN xvi. 28. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father.*

IN these words our Lord and Saviour brings together the mystery of His holy Incarnation and Nativity, and the mystery of His glorious Ascension; the beginning and the close of the visible part of the great mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh—received up into glory."

Truly has it been said of that great mystery, that the whole dispensation of our Lord's life in the flesh had this one main design, to direct our hearts and minds to spiritual and heavenly things, to wean us from the world, to lead us to heaven, "to bring us from the time of our

mortal life to the clear vision of Himself, and when so brought to satisfy us with the eternal glory of His countenance.”

The glorious Ascension, which we this day commemorate, was the crowning act of that love which He had shewn in coming forth from the Father, and coming into the world; and the lesson we have to learn from it is the crowning lesson of heavenly-mindedness, which the whole mystery of the Incarnation teaches us at every step. What is the humiliation of the Son of God but a condemnation of human pride? His lowly birth and life-long poverty, but a constant, silent condemnation of worldly greatness and worldly wealth? His cross and passion, and precious death and burial, but a call to that crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts, that deadness to the world and its false pleasures, which has ever characterized those who are Christ's? and what, finally, are His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, but mysteries which should raise us above all things here, and lift up our hearts, and fix them where alone true joys are to be found? They are thus, you see, only the crowning lesson of the whole mystery, considered in all its parts and at every stage. He descended to earth, to the lowest parts of the

earth, that we might ascend to heaven, even whither He is gone, who is high above all heavens. He took part in our human nature that He might make us partakers of the divine nature. He became the Son of Man to make us by adoption sons of God. He took upon Him our flesh that we might learn to know Him in the Spirit. He became visible to enable us to commune with the invisible. He passed through mortality and time to make us partakers of His own immortality and His own eternity. He died that we might live.

His passage through the world, as bearing on this great design to deliver us from its power, and to wean us from its vanities, and to teach us so to pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal, has formed a wonderful chain of holy doctrine and Christian practice, set forth link by link since Christmas. Then we sang of Him in the words of the Psalmist, "coming forth as a bridegroom out of His chamber, and rejoicing as a giant to run His course." And would you know how grandly and how vividly the grace of God is set forth in the Incarnation, and how the great and good of old, taking up the words of the Psalmist, would shew forth the glory of Christ, and talk of His power, that

His power, His glory, and the mightiness of His kingdom might be known unto men, hear some of the burning words of the great St. Augustine: "He came forth as a bridegroom, He rejoiced as a giant; fair, as a bridegroom; strong, as a giant; fair, that He may be loved, strong, that He may be feared; fair, that He might delight, strong, that He might conquer. Where is His beauty? 'Thou art fairer than the children of men.' Where is His strength? 'It is the Lord, strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle.' Isaiah saw and understood alike the beauty and the strength when he said, 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?'" Faith and love trace majesty and beauty through the whole course of His humiliation and sufferings, as well as in His Resurrection and Ascension; and discover power and strength amid all His apparent weakness, as well as in that great act by which He was declared to be the Son of God with power "according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;" and they point at every step to the mystery of Ascension day, the glorious close of that marvellous course. "He rejoiced," it is said in another place, "to

run His course; He ran, He tarried not; He ran, crying aloud by deeds and by words, by life and by death, by descent, by ascent, that we should return to Him, and then departed out of sight, that we might return into our hearts and find Him."

Now these words, grounded on a comparison of our Lord's life and death, Resurrection and Ascension, in the Gospels, with a verse of a Psalm, shewing the glowing words of prophecy as fulfilled in the gospel, and the simple narrative of the gospel as lighted up by the glowing words of prophecy, remind us at once of the privileges of those who saw Christ in the days of His flesh, and of the blessings reserved for us of these latter days, who walk by faith and not by sight. And written, as they are, with heartfelt vigour, by one who had to look back through nearly four centuries to the scene on which they are grounded, they shew us the power of Christian faith and Christian love to realize Christian truth.

The glory and beauty which shone through the veil of flesh in the person of our Lord and Saviour, the beloved disciple describes, when he says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory

as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Once, indeed, in the course of His earthly pilgrimage, towards its close, a special vision was vouchsafed to three disciples of the King in His glory and beauty, which they were forbidden to tell to any one till after the Resurrection, and which was, in fact, an earnest and foretaste of the Ascension itself. When He went up into mount Tabor, and was transfigured before them, as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening; His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. The King put on His glorious apparel. Whereas, in taking upon Him our nature, He had hidden Himself, and made darkness His secret place, and had veiled and shrouded Himself, as it were, with a cloud; at the Transfiguration, He clothed Himself with light, as with a garment, He made the Manhood radiant with the glory of His hidden Godhead: He decked Himself with majesty and excellency, and arrayed Himself with glory and beauty. But this vision of the excellent glory was but for a short season, it was transient, and with this exception, the Bridegroom was seen only as He appears to be described in some very

touching words of Solomon : " Behold, He standeth behind our wall, He looketh forth at the windows, shewing Himself through the lattice ; " manifesting forth His glory only in the power of His divine miracles, and His beauty in the grace of His human character.

Blessed indeed were they, as He Himself pronounced them, who thus saw His glory and His beauty ; but the deep feeling with which that very blessedness is spoken of by those who have, at a thousand years' distance, realized to themselves the position and circumstances of those who knew Christ in the days of His flesh, may well convince us again of the power of faith and love, through some holy fellowship of the Spirit, to realize their blessedness in a way and to a degree which may make it ours.

" Blessed were the eyes which saw the God of glory present in the flesh : the great Creator of the universe conversing with men in human form and human language, beaming forth in miracles, radiant with virtues ; healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils, and conferring like power upon men. And again : Blessed were the eyes which saw Him meek and lowly in heart, kind, affable, overflowing with mercy and tenderness ; the Lamb of God which knew no

sin, and bare the sins of all. Blessed the ears which heard the words of life from the mouth of the Incarnate Word Himself; to whom the Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, declared and made known what He had heard of the Father, so that they might draw the streams of heavenly doctrine from the all-pure fountain of truth itself."

But blessed as they were, who thus knew Christ after the flesh, who saw the miracles of mercy which He wrought, and heard the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; who had witnessed all that Jesus had done and taught till the day when He was taken up; blessed, I say, as they were, in seeing what they saw, and in hearing what they heard; He no less plainly told them, that there were better things in store for them, when they should see Him no more with the bodily eye, nor hear His voice with the bodily ear. When they were downcast at the prospect of losing Him, and sorrow had filled their heart, He said, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

St. John tells us, in the chapter with which he

introduces those most sublime and mysterious discourses which took place at the last supper, that, "when Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." The more we study and meditate on these discourses, the more we shall find that the love thus shewn to the end, is shewn even beyond the end. That, in fact, they contain in one view of them,—as indeed the Church teaches us herself, in reading them on the Sundays and Festivals between Easter and Whitsuntide,—they contain, I say, in one view of them, a sort of holy discipline, by which our Lord designed to wean His disciples from His bodily presence, and to train them for a more perfect, and spiritual, and most real presence when He should be gone.

Well may we believe and imagine, how the apostles in the bright and happy Paschal days, in which they saw their Lord at intervals, between the Resurrection and Ascension, were reminded again and again of His words at the last supper: "A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father." And on this

last great fortieth day, when He led them out to Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them, and was parted from them in the act of blessing them; as they saw His hands stretched out over them, and His last look turned towards them as the cloud received Him out of their sight, how must they have been reminded of His words, "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father," and of His promise that they should still see Him, when the world should see Him no more.

Above all, as they stood by the print of His last footsteps, and had now watched His human form and most glorious and benign countenance out of sight, how might their hearts burn within them as they remembered the solemn prayer and intercession with which He had closed those mysterious discourses, and connected with the prospect of His Sacrifice and Death, and His Ascension and Intercession, the most tender consideration of those whom He was about to leave behind in the world. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may also glorify Thee." "I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify

Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. I have manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world;”—“and now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given, that they may be one as we are.” And again: “Now come I to Thee, and these things speak I in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” Well might they cease at the angels’ word from gazing up any longer into heaven, and fall down upon the spot and worship Him. The remembrance of words like these might well enter into the “great joy” with which they returned to Jerusalem, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Whither He was gone they knew, and the way they knew. They had heard Him say, “I go to prepare a place for you.” And again: “Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold the glory which Thou hast given Me.” He ascended into heaven to shew them the way thither; He left them on earth His joy and His peace. In what did that joy and peace consist? Surely, as St. Paul will tell us, “in believing;” in faith

and hope and love. So long as they saw Him, there was no room for faith ; while they enjoyed His presence, there was no room for hope ; while they were attached to Him, however sincerely, as their Lord and Master, and Friend and Counsellor, yet knew Him only after the flesh, there was no room for that larger love which would be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, when He was gone.

Though in coming forth from the Father and in coming into the world, He never so left the Father, but that while He was conversing with men on earth He was still with the Father in heaven ; and though when He left the world and went to the Father, He did not so leave it but that He was still ever present with His Church ; it has been well said that He, the Son of God and the Son of Man, became known in a more excellent and more sacred way, when He withdrew Himself into the glory of His Father's Majesty, and in an ineffable way began to be more present invisibly in the Spirit, as He became more distant visibly in the Body. Hence, when sight failed, and faith and hope and love took its place, and the heart and mind had to ascend beyond where the eye could trace Him, in faith and hope and love, and in the proper direction

of the heart and mind was provided that better thing for us, that the eyewitnesses of our Lord's life and death, and Resurrection and Ascension, without us should not be made perfect.

Truly an elevating and enlarging employment is this for the heart and mind, at once to ascend with Him by faith above the highest heavens, and to realize His presence here on earth; to enter by hope into that within the veil, and at once to pray for His ever-present help and mercy in time of need, and to look for His second coming; and further, so to acquaint ourselves with Him, as to be able to say with St. Peter, "Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory!"

A high and holy and glorious thought is it, on the day when we trace the path of our ascended Lord beyond the limits of the vast universe, in an age when its infinite grandeur is ever unfolding, that the heart and mind of man trace their only adequate object beyond its utmost boundaries; and that, great as are the mysteries, and great the glories which science is discovering in it, faith and hope and love can descry greater mysteries and greater glories beyond. If, in one sense, the universe is too vast for the heart

and mind of man, in another, the heart and mind of man is too vast for the universe. True is it now, as when Solomon said it—"The eye is not satisfied with seeing." True now, as it was hundreds of years ago, when a wise and holy man thus reflected on those words, that "Science stretches herself as far as she can, but cannot take in the whole; whereas love exhausts the whole, and still cannot be satisfied. And why? because love is far more excellent than knowledge, and the human heart never says, 'It is enough,' till it arrives at Him, and finds Him by whom it was made, that it might be, and for whom it was made, that in Him it might be blessed."

What we have to pray for, then, is increase of faith to elevate the mind, and of hope to enlarge the heart, and of love to give light and life to both; to enlighten the understanding and to kindle the affections, and carry the whole soul, where the laggard body may one day follow it, beyond the boundaries of things visible, and fix its longing where sight cannot pierce, on Him who died to save it, on the "King in His beauty," and "the land which is very far off." There, in light unapproachable, is the blissful vision which alone can satisfy the heart and mind

of the Christian, the "same Jesus which was crucified," entered into His glory. The vision of which the disciples had an earnest when He was transfigured before them in the days of His flesh; the vision of which St. Stephen spoke at his martyrdom, when he cried, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God;" the vision of which St. Paul had an overwhelming sense, beginning at his conversion, when he heard amidst the glory of the light which blinded him, the voice, "I am Jesus;" and of which he had an increasing foretaste, as the eyes of his understanding were enlightened, nowhere more touchingly expressed than in his desire "to depart and to be with Christ."

Blessed earnestnesses are these of the power of our ascended Lord and Saviour to convert and to change us in life, and to console and support us in suffering and death. Faint and dim indeed, amidst all our misery and frailty, in this scene of sin and sorrow and death, must be any earnestnesses and foretastes of things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man to conceive. We must be changed to apprehend them; but Christ can change us. So far as they are revealed, they are

revealed to us by His Spirit, and in proportion as we seek Him with a lowly, penitent heart. In whatever way, however silently, He may whisper to us, unworthy as we are, by the voice of His Spirit within us, "Seek ye My face;" may He give us the heart to answer, "'Thy face, Lord, will I seek,"—"as for me, I will behold Thy presence in righteousness, and when I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION.

CHRIST LIFTED UP, DRAWING US TO HIM.

JOHN xii. 32. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.*

WE have just celebrated our Saviour's Ascension; we shall soon celebrate His sending down the Holy Spirit. In the meanwhile let us meditate on these words. When was our Saviour lifted up from the earth, to draw all men unto Him? It was first upon the cross. "This spake He," saith St. John, "signifying what death He should die." He was nailed upon the cross; then the cross was raised up high with Him upon it. On it was He lifted up from the earth—hanging, as it were, between earth and heaven; and from that cross, He says, "I will draw all men unto Me."

How has this declaration and prophecy been fulfilled?

It seemed at the time as if His cross, so far from attracting men, drove all from Him.

Before He was betrayed He had been followed by many disciples. His apostles had continued with Him in all His previous temptations.

On the cross, when lifted up from the earth, He seemed rejected, forsaken by all, by all in earth, and even all in heaven.

His own people, all the Jews, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, people, all with one consent had rejected Him; had said, "Not this man, but Barabbas;" had shouted, "Away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him."

Those who had followed Him before, shouting Hosannah, all the unsteady multitude, had now left Him; all His disciples, even His very apostles, had forsaken Him and fled. Peter, the chiefest in professions and zeal among them, had denied Him three times openly, even with oaths and curses. The women, His Mother, the beloved disciple, were there indeed by His cross; but they could do nothing for Him,—they did not minister unto Him. He commended them to each other, as if departing from them for ever.

All men around Him were upbraiding, reviling, scoffing at Him with one mind and voice, casting Him out with loathing and with contempt.

The very sun, the very heavens seemed to hide

their face from Him, as if they too were forsaking Him.

The legions of angels served Him not. God Himself seemed to have given Him over. He appeared utterly rejected by earth and heaven. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet of that moment He says, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all unto Me:" all things, the word is, not men alone, but all in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, angels, men, departed souls.

"For it pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell, and having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him; and you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind through wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unproveable in His sight."

Yes, on Calvary, on that dreadful cross, in that awful hour, amidst those fierce revilings, in

those fearful agonies, in that baffled thirst, in those cruel death-pangs, underneath that darkening sky, by that rending flesh, by that streaming blood, through those agonizing wounds, amidst that universal execration, deserted and forsaken, He, the criminal and outcast (as it seemed) of Jew and Gentile, earth and heaven, man and God, was at that very moment destroying Satan, abolishing death, removing sin, breaking down the partition wall, reconciling, and joining, and binding together, in ties which eternity shall not sever, Jew and Gentile, heaven and earth, sinners and angels, flesh and spirit, the old creation and the new, life and death, man and God,—drawing them together unto Himself, knitting them unto Himself, and all together in Him into one, to be the body, the temple of the living God for ever, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

See, as the first-fruits and type of this great union and incorporation, of this mighty drawing, He, the Son of God, the sinless and the holy, draws unto Himself, lifted up as He was on that cross, on that Golgotha, in that hour, a poor thief, a crucified malefactor, out of his sin, out of his scoffing and reviling, out of his unbelief, his misery, and his despair, out.

of the very jaws of Satan, the very mouth of hell. He draws him into repentance, into faith, into conversion, to sanctification, righteousness, holiness, unto Himself, to the communion of His saints, presently after death with patriarchs and prophets in paradise, with Himself, who is the head and bliss of paradise. That thief, that malefactor, my brethren, is the type of the elect, of those whom Christ draws and gathers unto Himself out of lost mankind, and out of the visible professing Church as it is seen on earth.

There were three crosses by Jerusalem; the Lord was on the middle one lifted up, and two guilty ones were with Him on their cross, one on the right hand, the other on the left. Surely He drew them both, both those reviling malefactors, pleaded for both, yearned for the conversion of both; and one yielded to His love; one withstood it. One was drawn, joined, united, incorporated into Christ, for time and for eternity. The other was not drawn; he remained in unbelief and scoffing; he died in unbelief and scoffing. One was taken and the other left. This is a type of mankind, it is a type of the Church of God. We all believe in Christ crucified. He has been lifted up, He would draw all men unto Him. All His pro-

fessing Church are, so to speak, beside Him on His cross. He calls, He draws all, but all are not drawn. He has died for all once, He has redeemed and joined to Himself all His visible Church; but He draws us singly, separately, individually; we are drawn by Him, and we accept Him, or we reject Him, singly, separately, individually; many are called, but few chosen: one is taken and another left.

But, my brethren, that penitent thief is in himself a peculiar case, a solitary, singular example of Christ's love, condescension, and converting, saving power before His exaltation into heaven. How does Christ now, by His being lifted up, draw all unto Him? "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Who is this Lamb, slain, we read, from the foundation of the world? Who is this Lamb in the midst of the throne, in the midst of the manifested heavenly glory?

Is He not Jesus, who, as the one eternal High Priest, offered Himself without spot to God, the one true Lamb which taketh away the

sins of the world, the one eternal, all-sufficient sacrifice?

And how was He then in the midst of the throne? As He had been slain; as He had been slain upon the cross.

He was there then, in heaven, lifted up from the earth indeed, far above all heavens, and all principality and powers, and every name that is named in earth and heaven; but as He had been slain, as the one continual, perpetual, eternal sacrifice,—lifted up to eternity on the altar of His cross, pleading His own blood before the eternal Father, and thence sending forth all the perfect influences of the Holy Spirit, to draw all men unto Him; to draw them and join them unto Himself, that they might be taken to be members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, quickened by His Spirit, living with His life, sanctified with His holiness, justified with His righteousness, filled with His joy.

It was then when He had risen with the soul and body which had been afflicted, rent and pierced on the cross, when He went up with them into heaven, and when, having by the offering of that sacrifice, and by His prevailing intercession, obtained for us the fulfilment of the Father's promise, even the promise of the Holy

Ghost, He poured it down upon His Church, and sent it forth even to the ends of the earth, —then it was that He began to draw all men unto Him. But this He sent forth then, and sends out still. He still sends that Spirit forth, from and through His crucified manhood, and by His prevailing intercession. We have no drawings from the Father, save through Him; no access to the Father, save through Him; no drawings of His Spirit, save through His sacrifice; no incorporations by the Spirit, save into His body.

And thus is His word fulfilled, which He spake of His death: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

And immediately, in the outpouring of His Spirit, in the first Pentecost after His ascension, He began mightily to fulfil His prophecy.

He drew His apostles out of all their fears, and doubts, and backwardness, and earthliness. By St. Peter's first sermon on His death and resurrection, He drew three thousand, it may be, from among His very murderers, out of that people who had reviled and scoffed at Him on His cross, out of reprobate Israel. From this His cross lifted up now in earth, and in heaven, He drew them and bound them unto Himself.

He drew five thousand next, and then multitudes both of men and women, multitudes even of those insulting, self-righteous priests, even fornicators and murderers, Gentiles next, kings next: everywhere, by the power of the Spirits and the power of His wounds, He drew men out of their hardness, stubbornness, darkness, ignorance, sinfulness,—drew them and joined them to His Church and to Himself. By His ministers and by His Spirit, He baptized, converted, renewed them, changed, justified, sanctified, glorified them, united them with Himself in everlasting bonds, joined them to patriarchs, prophets, angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, made them members of His body, bound them to Himself as their head, and to the Father; and by this union He imparted to them, and to us, Himself, His life, His peace, His joy, all the treasures of His grace, imparting to us His very flesh and blood, that we might dwell in Him and He in us.

But yet all the Jews were not drawn; and those who were drawn were drawn singly, one by one. There was of all Israel, only the “little flock,” the elect and remnant, drawn to the Lord: these believed, and the rest were blinded; these believed as God’s Spirit moved each of their

hearts, and drew them one by one to join themselves to the Lord, to follow the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And so it has been in every age.

My brethren, it is so still: Christ draws all, but all are not drawn; and of those who are drawn, each one yields himself to the Spirit, which draws them to Christ singly, one after another.

Before each soul which is drawn to Christ, Christ is lifted up: as it were raised before us on the cross, as the one atoning sacrifice, evidently set forth, as crucified for our sake.

Unto each soul which is drawn to Christ, Christ's love is revealed; Christ's love and our sinfulness. And what is the measure of His love and of our sinfulness; what is the revelation of His love and of our sinfulness, save His cross?

Thence do the spiritual bands of that love issue forth, to draw us and bind us to Him. The sense of our sinfulness, the view of His love; these are His hands, so to speak, stretched out upon the cross, whereby He draws us towards Himself.

Oh, holy Jesus, thus longing for our salvation! How can we, any of us, resist Thee, O Lord! how can any of us so weary Thee.

Why can we not give ourselves up to those blessed cords of love, body, soul, and spirit, that we may be drawn unto Thee, received into the love of Thine heart, and made one with Thee?

Is it not because so many will not think of Thee, therefore they are not drawn by Thee,—even when Thou thus art drawing them, they will think not of Thy love toward them; they love Thee not. Thy love, beaming from that cross, stirs them not, draws them not. They love their sins, they love themselves, they love their gains, they love their ease more than Thee.

One by one He draws us; one by one the careless and reprobate reject Him, and tread Him under foot; one by one His elect yield up their souls; one by one they cry, “Draw me, and I will run after Thee.” “My sheep,” He says, “hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;” “one is taken and another left.”

Lift Him up in your hearts, and your hearts in Him, from the earth. Lift Him up by prayer, by meditation, by continual remembrance of Him and His sacrifice, by continual devout communion,

He will draw you then; you will see Him then, as when He ascended far above all heavens to appear before the Father in His sanctuary, the

Son of Righteousness rising with healing on His wings.

As the sun, when it rises in its beauty, lights up the whole dark landscape, every leaf gleams, every dewdrop sparkles, so, when Christ thus rises on you, lifted up before you, His love will stream forth from Him over your whole life, over all your toil, and rest over all your joys and sorrows, over all your daily trials and self-denials ; over every the least work you do, the meanest duty which you perform ; counting you worthy to do all and bear all for His sake ; to do and bear all unto Him. His love streaming thus from the blessed mercy-seat, will cover your whole existence, and all the world around you, and especially all your devotion, with glory. Your soul will no more be formless, and void, and dark ; it will be full of light. The blessed Spirit of God will move sensibly upon it with His dove-like wings, and draw out thence the whole new creation, in all its harmony and beauty. He will change and transform it into the image and likeness of the Son of God, who draws you thus to Himself.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

WHIT-SUNDAY.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

ACTS ii. 1—4. *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

THIS day the Holy Ghost came down from heaven upon the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ; even as He had promised unto them,—"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." Such was the gracious promise made by our Saviour unto His disciples on the night before He suffered,—that, when He should be taken from them, He would send unto them from His Father Another, in His place, to be with

them and in them for ever, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, even the Third Person in the Ever-blessed Trinity, God the Holy Ghost. Such was His gracious promise, and that promise was fulfilled, as on this day, on the day of Pentecost.

Now the day of Pentecost, whereon our Saviour willed to fulfil this His promise to His disciples, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, was a great and holy day even under the Law, and had many names.

It was called the day of Pentecost because it fell on the fiftieth day after the Passover (the word Pentecost meaning the fiftieth); and it was ordered to be kept holy, because that on it, i.e. on the fiftieth day after the first Passover, the children of Israel came to Mount Sinai, and then and there received the Ten Commandments. Thus, as they were ordered to keep the Passover, every year, on that same night on which they came up out of Egypt, in memory of that great deliverance, so were they ordered to keep the feast of Pentecost, every year, on the fiftieth day after the Passover; in memory that, on the fiftieth day after they came up out of Egypt, they had received the Law (the Ten Commandments) on Mount Sinai. And thus, as the lamb of the Passover was a type and figure

of Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, and so the lamb of the Passover was ordered to be slain, every year, on the very day on which Jesus Christ suffered; so was the giving of the Law and Commandments on Mount Sinai, on the fiftieth day after, a type and figure of the giving of the Holy Ghost; and so they were ordered to keep holy, every year, the day of Pentecost, on which day Almighty God had decreed to give the Holy Ghost; and thus it came to pass, that, on the very day on which the Old Law was given on Mount Sinai, on that same day the Law went forth out of Sion, the New and Royal Law, even the Law of Jesus Christ, written in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Also this day was called "the feast of weeks," because it fell seven weeks, i.e. a week of weeks, after the Passover. Again, it was called the "feast of harvest," because that on it they offered thanksgivings to God for the bounties of the harvest, and presented to Him the first-fruits of the wheat-harvest, in bread baked of the new corn. All which, also, was as a type and figure of the apostles and disciples, thus set apart, and consecrated by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and offered up unto Almighty God, as the first-fruits of that spiritual harvest, whereof the whole world

was to be the field, the true believers in Jesus Christ the wheat, and heaven the barn and garner into which they should be gathered. Thus so many ages before had Almighty God set apart this very day of Pentecost, for that great work which He purposed to work in it; herein also, as in other matters, making the ordinances of the Law to serve as types and figures to set forth the spiritual mysteries and spiritual gifts of the Gospel;—a consideration which may help us to realize how blessed is our state in the Church of Jesus Christ, unto whom it is given to see plainly what prophets and righteous men desired to see, but saw not at all, or only in type and shadow.

Thus far of the day on which Almighty God willed to bestow upon man this gift of gifts, even the gift of His Holy Spirit. It was no common day, but a great and holy day; already consecrated and set apart in memory of past blessings bestowed by Almighty God upon His chosen people of Israel, and thus made meet to be that on which His last and perfect gift should be bestowed upon the Church of Jesus Christ.

Next, of the persons, unto whom this gift was bestowed, upon whom the Holy Ghost descended, —surely it is not without special reason and pur-

pose that it is said of them, "they were all with one accord in one place." When He, the Spirit of love, and peace, and unity, came down from heaven, to dwell among men and in men, they, upon whom He descended at the first, were "all with one accord in one place;" it was upon such that the Holy Spirit came down, it was in the hearts of such that the Holy Spirit found His resting-place. Unity and charity are both His gifts and work in us, and they are that, failing which, we cannot look for His presence. Great blessing indeed is oneness of heart; great blessing indeed that true temper of love and charity, "the very bond of peace and of all virtues." Surely of such it is said, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity." Such was the Church of Jesus Christ at the first; both when "they were all with one accord in one place," when the Holy Spirit came down upon them; and, much more, after that He, the Spirit of love, and peace, and unity, had come down to dwell among them. Then we read, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and

breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. . . . And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul : neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common." . . Such was the unity, and love, and charity, which was wrought in the early Church of Jesus Christ by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit ; and, as a type and figure of this, they, upon whom He descended, were gathered together with one heart and one mind, "they were all with one accord, in one place."

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." Almighty God had been pleased to make the wind to be a type of His Spirit, even in the Old Testament. Thus, in the vision of the dry bones, of the prophet Ezekiel ; even after the prophet had prophesied to them, and the bones had come together, and the sinews and the flesh had come up upon them, and the skin had covered them above ; still there was no life in them, until the wind had breathed on them ;

even as there is no true spiritual life to the soul, save by the Holy Spirit of God. Thus Ezekiel was charged to prophesy unto the wind, —to say to the wind, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied . . . and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet.” And upon this the prophet was warned, that “these bones are the whole house of Israel,” and that the vision he had seen was a figure of what Almighty God shall do for His people, when He shall open their graves, and cause them to come up out of their graves, and shall put His Spirit in them, and they shall live; they that are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, buried in the grave of sinful lusts, they shall hear His voice, they shall be raised by His Spirit, breathing into them a new and better life, such as of themselves they have not.

So, again, our Lord, in His discourse with Nicodemus, uses the wind as a figure of the power of the Spirit. When our Lord had warned him, that, “Except a man be born again, (of water and of the Spirit,) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” Nicodemus enquired, “How can a man be born again when he is old?” And our Lord

answered, that the way of the Spirit is full of mystery, viewless, and hidden, even as the way of the wind: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." Such was the outward form whereby the gift of the Holy Ghost was set forth; and herein was fulfilled that of St. John Baptist, wherein he spake of the baptism of Jesus Christ as set far above his own: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." And well, in many ways, may the outward element of fire set forth the inward work of the Holy Ghost. For as the fire at once consumes and refines,—consumes the dross and refines the metal,—even so doth the Holy Spirit within us consume what is carnal and earthly, and cleanse and purify whatever in our nature admits of being cleansed and purified. Again, as fire is the source of light and heat, even so doth the Holy Ghost at once enlighten our minds

and warm our hearts ; maketh us both to know and to love the will of God ; setting up within us the light of truth, and calling up in us the flame of charity.

“And there appeared unto them cloven tongues. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” And herein, as it were, the curse of Babel was reversed. Then the Lord confounded the language of all the earth . . . “that they may not understand one another’s speech . . . So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth.” Such was the sentence of God’s heavy wrath against the wilful pride and rebellious spirit of man, when, at Babel, man essayed to build a city and a tower (whose top may reach unto heaven), in despite of God. And this sentence and curse Almighty God, as on this day, set aside, by the power which He gave to the apostles, “to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance ;” so that men out of every nation under heaven, all at one time heard them speak, every man in his own tongue wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God. And as God, at Babel, had taken from men the power to understand one another, in order to scatter

them over the face of the earth, that they might not build for them one city; even so did God, on the day of Pentecost, restore by special miracle this power, that so, by the preaching of the holy apostles, men of all nations might be called and gathered into one, into One City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, into the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For the Holy Ghost was given at the first unto the apostles, not alone for themselves, but for others also,—for us, and for all men:—not alone to renew, to cleanse, to sanctify their hearts, but to open their lips, and thus to fit them to discharge the command of our Saviour, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

Yet, although the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were given on the day of Pentecost, were more marvellous, yet are they not truly greater and better than the usual gifts of the Spirit, which God vouchsafes to all the faithful. The miraculous gifts would seem, for the most part, to have been beyond the order of God’s usual Providence, and to have been vouchsafed only for a time, according as they were needed for the spread of the Gospel, or for the confirmation of the faith of such as believed; but the usual and ordinary

gifts of the Spirit, to renew, and cleanse, and sanctify the heart, as they have been at all times needed, so have they been at all times given. They are as truly assured to us at this day as they were assured to the apostles. There is no help of God's Holy Spirit in the way of holiness and righteousness, but that we have the same; the same in our day as the apostles had in their day. Let us lay this seriously to heart, because it contains this awful truth,—that, if we at this day are not holy as they were, if we do not serve God, love God, worship God, as they did, if our charity towards our poorer brethren is not such as theirs, we, and we alone, are to blame. It is we who are wanting to ourselves. No means of grace, no gifts of the Holy Spirit, are wanting to us, to enable us to perfect holiness. However much we may fall short of them, it is all through our own sin; it must all lead to our own shame and condemnation.

Christian brethren, let us lay this seriously to heart on this day of Pentecost, set apart, as it is, for the thankful remembrance of the descent of the Holy Spirit. Let us lay to heart the greatness of God's mercies towards us, the greatness of His spiritual gifts to us; let us lay to heart that we, each one of us, have received that same Holy

Spirit, who, as on this day, came down from heaven. Our souls, our very bodies have been made His temples. Now should we not be careful to keep them clean from all sin, pure and holy, even as He is holy,—all holy in Himself, and the author and cause of all holiness in man?

Such is the solemn lesson which St. Paul teaches to the Corinthians, and with his words I will end. May God give us grace to lay them to heart, whenever we are tempted to forget the spiritual gift within us, to grieve the Holy Spirit of God by wilful sin, or to defile our souls or bodies by any uncleanness. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. . . . What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

WHIT-SUNDAY. No. II.

THE QUICKENING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

GEN. i. 2. *And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

THE creation of the heavens and the earth was a type of the regeneration of man. The earth was "without form and void, and darkness was upon the deep," when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. So likewise nothing could be darker, or more hopeless, than the state of human society when "the day of Pentecost was now fully come." The Israelite alone possessed the truth of God; and he held it in unrighteousness." The very teachers, "the wise," had made the Word of God void "through their traditions." The blood of the prophets had polluted the holy place. The high-priest had condemned the Son of God. The chosen people had risen up and cast their King out of His vineyard, and had slain Him. Beyond the borders of the chosen land, "gross darkness covered the people." They "wor-

shipped and served the creature more than the Creator." Inspired words have depicted the monstrous wickedness which then prevailed unchecked throughout the most civilized portions of earth. St. Paul has engraven, as it were with "the finger of God," the dreadful character which mankind had more and more deeply assumed. "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, malice, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God; despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

It was a moral wreck. The iniquity of the world was full, and, as in the material creation, it was out of a chaos of despair, and darkness, that a new life was to spring. The Son of God had come, and had manifested Himself in the flesh, but He had not imparted to His brethren the benefits

of His incarnation. He had taken into Himself the human form, soul and body, fallen as it was, and He had redeemed it, and raised it in Himself, even to the right hand of God. But the life which was in Him had not yet gone forth from Him, to raise and renew our fallen nature. As yet the world which He had redeemed lay before Him, "dead in trespasses and sins!" There was no power in man to arise, no capacity for receiving the atonement, no heart even to believe, no innate strength to lay hold of the powers of the world to come.

It was the Spirit of God alone that could enable man to receive Christ, and the Spirit could not be given till after our Lord's ascension into heaven. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." And here is the reason of the expediency. Man needed a Spirit of holiness, who, dwelling in him, can create out of his nothingness a new and divine life. "The Spirit is life,"—life not merely in Himself, but to everything wherein He dwells. He is the principle of life to man; He quickeneth whom He will. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also

quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." It was as entirely a new creation when the Spirit of God moved upon mankind, according to the promise of Jesus, as when the heavens and the earth which we now behold arose out of chaos.

And the Spirit of God came with the like marks of miraculous agency, and of abundant life. "When the day of Pentecost was now fully come, they were all with one accord in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Instantly they were instinct with new powers and a new life. Rising and going forth from that upper chamber, they went into the streets of Jerusalem, and the whole city was moved. "They were all amazed, and marvelled." "And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." They went throughout the cities of Israel, and onward among all nations, even unto the ends of the world. Wherever they went, new life sprang up around them. They preached Jesus and the resurrection, and everywhere men believed; and

wherever man believed, the face of society was transformed. The progress of life was gradual, not instant, as in the change that passed upon the face of the earth, because the material upon which the Spirit of God was now working was wholly different. He now moved upon mankind, upon beings endued with a free will, to be acted upon according to the laws of reason and the rules of a higher life. The effects were manifested gradually, but they were the same everywhere. Heathen idolatries passed away. Within the sacred shrines that in every place arose, men of all classes, and all ranks, and all ages, knelt around the same altar. They bowed alike before the invisible God, and Jesus Christ, whom He had sent. Everywhere men alike gloried in the Cross, because by it the world was crucified unto them, and they unto the world.

All forms of love and pity thenceforth made for themselves an abode upon earth: works of mercy everywhere abounded. The sick were healed, the poor were fed, the sorrowful were comforted, the fatherless and widow found a home, the outcasts were gathered in, even the madman had his resting-place. All had become brethren. The wealthiest went about doing good; the nobles washed the poor disciples' feet. "See how these Christians

love one another," was everywhere the astonished cry of the yet unconverted heathen.

And this change upon the face of society was the effect of a deep change wrought within the very hearts of men. The cloven tongues of flame which "sat upon each of them," were but visible symbols of something far deeper. The power of speaking divers kinds of tongues was but a mechanical gift,—merely a miraculous enlargement of man's physical faculties. Even the inspiration of mind which enabled the apostles and prophets to understand mysteries, and communicate new truths to mankind, was a power external to the man himself; they did not influence the heart. He might understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and yet be nothing. These were but outward tokens of a divine presence, which had come down to move within the soul, invisible, incomprehensible to human sense. The troubled deep of the human heart would have still heaved darkly beneath, if only the power of languages and the knowledge of mysteries had been imparted to man. These were but the least of His gifts, merely the signs and tokens of an inward presence; the real and most marvellous change was the influence that the Spirit of God was exercising upon the soul, quickening

what was dead, forming a new nature, infusing into the inner man a new character and life. "This is the covenant that I will make with you after those days, saith the Lord : a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; I will take out of you a stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh." The effects manifest upon the world at large were the consequence of this moving of men's hearts. Individual men were influenced and changed, and thus society was stirred from its depths ; it was from within that the movement spread ; a deep moral work of regeneration had taken place in the character of the great company of believers, and they thus had power to move the world. The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters of human society, because He had moved first within the deep of man's own heart.

There was a greater miracle worked on the day of Pentecost, than the appearance of the cloven tongues of flame, and the speech of divers languages. The men who became God's instruments for the conversion of the world were themselves inwardly transformed ; they were within their own souls endued with power from on high. The greatest difference is perceptible in the state of the apostles before and after the day

on which the Spirit came down to dwell in them. Fearful, slow of understanding, unbelieving, ambitious, rivalling one another, unable to bear suffering, or contempt,—such they are continually represented to have been in the Gospels. When we read of them, in the Acts of the Apostles, after they went forth from that upper chamber, how vast the difference! Undaunted before the rulers, unmoved by fear or shame, patient in tribulation, counting it joy to suffer persecution for Christ's sake, having faith to remove mountains, and yet united in the bond of a common love, meek and lowly of heart, unwearied in labours and watchings, persevering even unto death, sealing their unchanging testimony with their blood,—such is their history in the Acts of the Apostles. The cause of the difference was that they had received the Spirit of Christ.

And that Spirit was to abide with us for ever. As the life which entered into the mass of matter out of which the heavens and the earth were formed, still abides in it, quickens it with ever-renewed life, reproducing again and again the very same forms of life, so is the Spirit which renews and quickens man. “The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

The gift of Pentecost was not one that spent itself in its first fulness. It did not return back to heaven after its first outpouring upon mankind. The Comforter was to "abide with" us; "for ever." He dwells in us. He is the soul of our soul, the life of our life. He was not to return ascending into the heavens as our Lord. He was to abide in the Church until the end. And His inward gifts are still the same, and as rich as at the beginning. There is no reason to doubt but that the same inward powers are infused into the regenerate soul now, as at the beginning. The external signs and wonders only have ceased. The same presence is amongst us, is in us; only the visible tokens are withdrawn. The visible tokens are no longer necessary as at the beginning, for Christ is "believed on in the world." But the same necessity exists for His divine presence in our souls, to renew our inward life; for without Him "we can do nothing." There is no change in the inward gifts of grace, though its outward manifestations, which startled and convinced the first converts among the nations, are no more. The very same fruits of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"—are being formed in us now, as they

were formed of old. "The manifestation of the Spirit is" equally "given to every man to profit withal;" but it is in his inward spiritual life, and not in any miracles of outward and visible wonder. There is the very same power given now to overcome the world, as that which inspired the apostles: the very same miracles of grace are worked now, as then, in the recreation of the soul after the image of God: the very same influences whereby Christ is formed in us, are exerted amongst us day after day; the very same "exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe," is at all times and in all places operating amongst us; the hindrances to its more perfect manifestation are solely in ourselves. *We* interpose checks; *we* harden our hearts to His gracious influences. Our infirmities obscure the glory of His presence. But there is no stinting of the Spirit Himself. There is no withdrawal or lessening of the gifts of grace which God has for ever promised to them that love Him.

Such, then, is that outpouring of the Spirit, of which prophecy so long spake. Nothing before had been given like unto this. Partial gifts there had been, as the dawnings of the coming day: individuals had been raised up here and there, and at different seasons, who were exalted above

their fellows, being endowed with the fullest, richest gifts of the Spirit of God. But these were exceptions to the general order of things, they were heralds of the approach of the kingdom of God, not instances of what was ordinarily found among their people in their day. And it was only through His Son that the Spirit was shed forth in fulness upon the Church. Then only came the days of which the prophet Joel spake: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy." And again, in Isaiah, God saith, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses."

We have entered into this blessed inheritance; we have been all baptized into the same Spirit. We are possessors of the Pentecostal gift. The Spirit that then came down to dwell among us, has not departed, will never depart. He abideth

in us, till He hath accomplished the number of His elect. The day of Pentecost, that opened upon the world, has had no setting. It is the one "day of salvation," "the accepted time." As we are of the "one body" with the early Church, and the "one Lord," and the "one faith," and the "one baptism," so we are of the "same Spirit;" "we are baptized into one Spirit." Our commemoration of to-day only reminds us again and again of the fulness of our inheritance, and of the unexhausted gift which the Divine love hath poured forth upon us.

There is one practical question, which must ever press upon us in contemplating such a season as this. Where are the fruits of that Divine gift in our own lives? Are we now led by that Spirit? Do we live in that Spirit? He hath given to us all things needful for life and godliness. The solemn enquiry which every one of us should make this day is, what is the effect upon our lives; whether or no we have profited as we might by the Divine blessings?

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

WHIT-MONDAY.

THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT.

ACTS viii. 17. *Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

GOD was manifest in the flesh. He revealed Himself to human eyes, as far as it was possible, in "the man Christ Jesus." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He spake to us as man speaks, and acted as man acts; in human words and actions, the divine mind was evidently declared, and His power put forth. "And we beheld His glory," saith St. John, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." When our Lord ascended into the heavens, through Him came down the Holy Ghost, who was to abide with us on earth for ever. As the Holy Ghost descended upon the Son of Man, and abode upon Him, so afterwards, through Christ, He came down upon His Church and dwelt in it. In Christ alone "dwelt the fulness of

the Godhead bodily," in us only in measure; but "of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

And now the Holy Ghost dwells and acts in the Church. Our Lord "was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." But we, too, have received the unction of the Holy One, and in our measure are partakers of the very same life which abides in our Lord. He received the Spirit of the Father, that He might impart the Spirit to us His brethren. The light which the faithful let shine before men is the light of the Spirit of God dwelling and working in them. All holy deeds, all words of truth, all sacrifices of love, all thoughts of wisdom, all forms of piety, all burning impulses of zeal, are the actings of the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. He thus manifests Himself now in the body of His Church. Each man has his own proper gift of God,—one after this manner, another after that manner; there are diversities of gifts, whether for holiness of life, or for different administrations, offices, or works within the Church. But all are the inspiration of the One Spirit, "dividing to every man severally as He will."

Moreover, each member of the body has his own usefulness in the body. God imparts His

gifts to us not for our own sake only, but also for the sake of others. He makes each member of the body an instrument of blessing to others. He acts on one man through another man. He has laid up His "treasure in earthen vessels," and through them it is communicated to His elect. We are made dependent one on another in spiritual, as in worldly, things. It is in the spiritual, as it is in the natural, creation. The creatures minister to each other's good. So likewise has it been ordained in the gifts of grace. They come to us through the instrumentality of our fellow-men. God has constituted the body of His Church, as He has formed the natural body. In both cases, the members are made the means of blessing mutually to each other. St. Paul reveals this great truth in the Epistle to the Corinthians: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gift of healing, by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues."

And as these gifts of God are imparted severally to the different members of the body, so is there necessarily a dependence of one upon another. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." It is still God working, but He works through instruments whom He hath formed and chosen to fulfil His will. They are equally His gifts, though He is pleased to convey them through the hands of our fellow men.

It is thus that God employs a human ministry to convey His spiritual gifts. When Christ withdrew His visible presence from the eyes of men, immediately He ordained ministers to act in His Name, to stand as in His stead upon the earth. This was the very first appointment of the Holy Ghost, after Jesus had ascended into the heavens. "Wherefore," He saith, "when He ascended up on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." And this appointment was made necessary for the salvation of His people, and the carrying on Christ's work upon earth. It was ordained "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the

edifying of the body of Christ, 'till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Through a human ministry the Holy Ghost works, and the blessings of the atonement are conveyed. Through the hands of men, like unto ourselves, the gifts of God now pass; by means of human acts grace is given. Thus, in the Name of God, men speak, in His Name they baptize, in His Name they absolve. Under the veil of sacraments, which men administer, invisible operations are performed and sealed. Christ Himself is in these acts, and blesses what He Himself ordained. This is the meaning of the last promise which He gave His apostles at the close of the Gospel: "Lo, I am with *you* always, even unto the end of the world." It could not be meant that He should be with them always personally on earth, for they were to die. How then with them? Surely with them in their ministerial work, and so with those who should succeed them; with them in that respect in which they could not die, in their ministry, which was to continue on through their successors, even to the end of the world.

In all ordinances of the Church of God we must, therefore, look beyond the visible instrument. We must look at the *One* only true and unseen Priest who is really present, and really works through a visible human priesthood. Earthly priests are but the agents and representatives of the One Eternal Priesthood of Christ. The visible ministry of men is but a symbol of His presence, and a channel of His mysterious operations. He thus still manifests Himself to mortal eyes, still speaks, still stretches out His hand to bless, still moves amongst us to and fro, "healing every sickness and disease." They who minister are but the hands and feet, the mere organs, of Him who walketh "amidst the golden candlesticks;" the ever-present Lord, who is alone the Light and Life of men. Christian ordinances are not as the Jewish. These were but "the shadows" of Him that was to come; Christian ordinances are the actual, living means in which He is, through which He acts. They are not shadows, but substances; not indeed substances in themselves, but because the Holy Ghost sanctifies them, and makes them the real channel through which Christ communicates Himself to the soul. He makes them to be what in themselves they are not, and cannot be, be-

cause He who is the Life is in them. In receiving them, according to His will, we therefore receive Him.

We may instance this in the special case referred to in the text, the ordinance of Confirmation. The text describes the first instance that is recorded of the exercise of that great ordinance. Philip the deacon had gone from Jerusalem to Samaria, and there had baptized many, both men and women. The report of the success of his mission reached the ears of the apostles, who still tarried at Jerusalem: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John." The company of apostles depute these two, who were as leaders amongst them, to go forth and confirm: "Who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost." But the prayer must be accompanied by the outward act. "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Here, in these brief words, we may read great truths. (1.) That Baptism does not make the complete Christian. It must be succeeded by another sacred gift. Therefore Confirmation has been ever regarded as the com-

plement of holy Baptism. It supplies what is yet lacking in that great sacrament. (2.) That as in Baptism, so in Confirmation, there must be the human ministry and the outward act; the channel of communication between God and man must be employed; the apostle must go down, and with prayer lay his hands upon those that have been baptized. (3.) That the human act is but a symbol, and a means; that One greater is therein; that the overshadowing hands of the apostle merely represent the hand of God, which thus blesses His own elect; and that through the ministry of man the Holy Ghost is given.

Confirmation, then, is a sacramental rite; it has an outward visible sign and an inward invisible grace, and that inward invisible grace is the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is to be remarked that there are but two instances recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, where the Holy Ghost was given without the use of appointed means. Once, on the day of Pentecost, when as yet there were none among men commissioned to minister in holy things. Christ must send forth His apostles by an outpouring of the promised Comforter sent down upon them direct from heaven. The other instance was, when, before the astonished

eyes of St. Peter, the Holy Ghost fell upon the first Gentile, Cornelius, as though an apostle must be convinced by the immediate act of God that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Besides these eventful acts of grace, it was by "the laying on of hands," of men commissioned of God to act in His Name, that the Holy Ghost imparted Himself and His most blessed gifts. It is not that God has limited Himself to human agency, or that ordained means can confine or exhaust the divine gift; but He is pleased to bind the members of His Church by bonds of mutual fellowship, and to certify His invisible acts of grace by signs and instruments palpable to human eyes. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But God is pleased, and in mercy to human infirmity, to mark the coming of the invisible Spirit by outward tokens, and thus assure us of the truth of His inward gifts of grace. He has ordained means which He has promised to bless, and we know that He will never command a means to be employed, and leave those who use it in faith destitute of the promised blessing. When we see the hand

of Christ's chief minister resting on the head of the baptized, and the prayer, pleading the eternal promise, is heard, we cannot doubt, though we cannot see, the descent of the Holy Ghost, to dwell within the soul of the confirmed, as the source and strength of an endless life.

Two thoughts may be added before we close. (1.) It has been a most merciful provision of God thus to accompany the unseen communications of His Spirit with outward signs; for how many doubts may trouble the mind, whether we have received the Holy Ghost, or no? Can we judge by the evidence of a converted will? But how liable are we to be deceived as to our inward state! We may fear where there is no fear, and we may presume when no hope is left. The most faithful are subject to distressing doubts, and the most reprobate may think their way right, though it be the way of death. Might not the doubt constantly recur as to the time when we were supposed to have received the divine gift? Who can interpret impressions upon the mind, and judge whether they be the impulses of the Spirit of God, or no? Specially in times of trial and spiritual deadness, how oppressive is the very least doubt as to God's dealings towards us? But when it is revealed to us,

that whosoever rightly receives the appointed ordinance, to him assuredly the Holy Ghost is given in that ordinance, how much distressing uncertainty is spared to us ; what quietness and assurance is the result ! We do not then rest on any impressions of our own, but on the Word of God ; not on any human evidence, but on the express appointment of our Lord. We may then safely interpret all the motions of good within us to be inspirations of the Holy Ghost, fruits of the blessed gift conveyed to us through the ordained means. We can point to the very time and manner wherein He came to us. Faith has its assured resting-place, the very sign, the seal of God's presence.

(2.) So likewise this sure witness is a remembrance to urge us perpetually to increased efforts in God's service. The thought will at times come over us, that great facts have passed in our soul's history ; that we have been singled out from the world for great endowments ; that we are regenerate in Baptism ; that we are sanctified and endued with the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost in Confirmation ; that great spiritual agencies have thus manifestly, and according to divine appointment, been at work upon us. And this consciousness is a continual spur ; a reproach

for spiritual sloth and negligence ; a stimulus to more earnest efforts. “ Stir up the gift that is in thee through the laying on of hands,” is the voice which sounds through the heart in the recollection of such an act as our Confirmation. It marks the time when God thus came to us ; and we can judge how small has been our progress, how long has been our misuse of God’s blessed gifts. It is, on the one hand, a perpetual witness against us, but, on the other, an unfailing encouragement ; for we know that the gifts of God are without repentance. He who has thus come down upon us, through our Lord’s intercession, came to abide for ever ; and though we have grieved Him, yet He only waiteth to be gracious ; yea, though we may have quenched Him, yet, at our instant cry, He will return, and revive and quicken us with His unexhausted life.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

WHIT-TUESDAY.

THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

ST. MATT. xii. 32. *And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*

EVERY gift of God involves responsibility, and the greater the gift, the greater is the responsibility. Great powers abused bring on the favoured possessor a fearful retribution. The higher the condition in which a man is placed, if he fall, the greater is his fall. The fall of the angels is irretrievable. No redemption is open to the angels who "kept not their first estate." Jerusalem, once the most favoured city in all the earth, lies now under the heaviest curse. What could be more terrible than the last end of Judas, and he was one of the twelve! Darkness ap-

pears to the natural eye the more dark, if it has been preceded by a brilliant blaze of light. The sin of the Jews arose from the circumstance, that the Lord had Himself come unto them. "If I had not come and spoken unto you, ye would not have had sin; but now ye have no excuse for your sins." It was the greatness of the grace manifested which made their sin so great, that they would scarcely have been accounted sinners, had He not so come unto them.

We have already spoken of the great gifts which flow from the presence of the Holy Ghost abiding in the Church. We should expect therefore, that sin would become the more exceeding dreadful when such gifts are abused. This we should reasonably expect. But the text reveals a condemnation even beyond what we could have imagined. Indeed, a great difficulty seems at first sight involved in its awful words. Why is it, that if one "speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come?" Why this difference? Why is the sin against the Son of Man less fatal to the soul, than the sin against the Holy Ghost? Why is the sin against the

Holy Ghost utterly without hope of forgiveness? The answer is as follows. When the Jews rejected the Lord Jesus, refusing to acknowledge Him as the promised Messiah, there was yet hope, because the Holy Spirit was to come, and through Him they might repent and believe. Of the Spirit our Lord said in another place, "When He is come, He shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment." He might convince the Jewish unbelievers of the sin of their unbelief. There was hope therefore, because there might yet be repentance. But when the Holy Ghost had come, and He too was rejected, there was no further hope, because the mission of the Holy Ghost was to be followed by no further means of grace. The mission of the Holy Ghost is the last communication of God to man. The heavens were then closed; the door of mercy was shut; not because God ever willeth the death of a sinner, or ever turns away His face from one who truly repents, but because there could be no repentance, when the last offer was rejected, the last act of mercy refused. The sin against the Son of Man was not in itself less fatal than the sin against the Holy Ghost. It was less fatal only because the Holy Ghost was afterwards to be given, and they who

had rejected the Son might yet be saved under the influences of the Comforter, who was to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto them. The sin against the Holy Ghost left no hope, because, if His blessed influence were quenched, no other Divine Person was to come forth, through whom life could be given. There remained then no more quickening unto life, as there was "no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which should devour the adversaries."

And do we not see this awful truth manifested in the history of the Jewish people? They "crucified the Lord of glory;" utterly rejecting His claim to be the long-promised Messiah. But even then the mercy of Heaven was not stayed. The city was not destroyed. Within its walls the Holy Ghost was to descend. In their streets they were again to hear the Word of God, and to see "miracles, and signs, and wonders," worked in the Name of the Lord Jesus by men endued with the power of the Holy Ghost. Their own sons and daughters were to prophesy and to cast out devils, and to see visions, through the Spirit, which was poured out upon them like water from on high. The way of repentance was opened. The whole nation might even then have returned

unto the Lord their God, and He would have had mercy upon them ; and to their God, and He would have abundantly pardoned. Many did thus turn and repent. Many, who had blasphemed the Name of the Son of Man, learned to adore Him. Many who had stood beneath the cross, wagging their heads, afterwards smote their breasts, and mourned for Him as for an only son. || One who had “thought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth,” and had long kicked “against the pricks,” became one of the chiefest apostles of Him whose name he had blasphemed. But a remnant only was thus found. God had left Him only, as of old, “the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” The voice of the Holy Ghost was rejected by the people, even as the Son of Man had been rejected. The Church of the Redeemer, wherein the Holy Ghost abides and the manifold wisdom of God is displayed, was persecuted and cast out, even as the Lord Himself, its Head and Master, had been cast out of the city. Then the doom of the devoted city was sealed. Then the decree went forth. The day of visitation was closed. No more interpositions from Heaven were to be vouchsafed even to the children of Abraham. The fatal blasphemy against the Holy

Ghost had risen up to heaven, and there was no forgiveness, "neither in this world, neither in the world to come." They had committed the unpardonable sin, and the destruction of Jerusalem, and the desolation of the chosen people, are the sad and unchanging witnesses to the truth of the awful warning of the text.

It is evident, then, that the sin against the Holy Ghost, in its extreme guilt, could not be committed till after the day of Pentecost. Then the Spirit of God was poured forth in fulness of grace, being shed abroad in the hearts of all them that believed. The Gospel was preached, with the demonstration of the "Spirit and with power." Signs and wonders were done openly in all places, beginning at Jerusalem. New ministerings commenced, which were never to cease till the end came, the Holy Ghost accompanying and blessing them with manifold gifts of grace. The light which shone before men, in the grace of sacraments, and in the lives of the redeemed, was the illumination of the Holy Ghost indwelling and working throughout the entire body of the Church. The visitations of the Holy Ghost before the day of Pentecost had been partial, confined to chosen individuals, and for special purposes. He had

now come to dwell among men, and, as Christ had died for all, so the Holy Ghost was given to all them that believed.

Again, it is evident from this account, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin which now lies darkly upon the world. There are two cases in which this dreadful sin is directly manifested. It is manifested in its deadliest guilt in those who, having been "once enlightened, and having tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good Word of God, and the power of the world to come," have afterwards finally fallen away. Such transgressors have in the most fatal manner "crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh," and "done despite to the Spirit of grace." These are the miserable apostates who have darkened the path of the Gospel of life; the corrupted fig-trees, which, though planted in the vineyard of God, have but cumbered the ground, and cast their baneful shadow all around. Fearful monuments are these of the grace of life abused, and gifts of infinite power wasted: "for the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which

beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

Apostacy is the most dreadful instance of the unpardonable sin; but it is no less fatal to reject the Gospel whenever it is fully presented to the soul; to see the work of God, and the power of the Holy Ghost, and the evidences of God's love for fallen man, and of our Lord's Death and Passion, and yet to harden the heart against them. If it be more hateful to relapse into infidelity after the good gifts of God have been tasted, and to quench what has once been kindled in the soul through God's great love; yet there can be no hope for any one so long as he denies the Holy One and the Just, and rejects the voice of Him who speaketh from heaven; "for if the word spoken by angels (the Mosaic law) was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?"

Such are the more direct and palpable cases

of the unpardonable sin. Whoever rejects the Gospel now, is rejecting a clear manifestation of God, speaking to his very inmost heart. He is rejecting a cloud of witnesses, which encompass him about, and which are clothed with signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. He is rejecting the presence of God, which is proclaimed in works which never cease, in the restoration of fallen souls, in quickening those who lay dead in trespasses and sins, in acts of holiness, in words of truth, in counsels of wisdom, in the preaching of evangelists, in ministerings of perpetual blessing, in all the rites and forms of the Church of God, in signs and sacraments, in works of mercy and inward calls of grace, in stirrings of the heart and convictions of the conscience, in great realities stamped upon the face of the whole Christian world, and in whisperings secret, but as real, always heard within the depths of one's own soul. The Holy Ghost still, day after day, speaks with tongues like as of fire, to every man in his own tongue, the wonderful works of God; to reject the Gospel of the Spirit of Christ, is to deny Him whose glory filleth the heavens and the earth.

But is the sin against the Holy Ghost confined to such extreme cases as these? If we are pre-

served from apostacy or unbelief, is there still danger lest any man should fall into the unpardonable sin? No doubt, in the extremest and most complete meaning of the terms, the blasphemy against which our Lord so fearfully warned mankind, is limited to such cases. But does not the same warning apply, in a less extreme sense, yet still very fearfully, to others? Most surely these dreadful words of our Blessed Master are a warning to every Christian. It is the peculiar guilt of sin in Christians, that it is done against the inward light and life wherewith they are so mercifully gifted. Holy Baptism invests us with the first inflowing of the Holy Ghost, as we are then capable of receiving. We receive the remission of sins through spiritual regeneration. The baptism of Christ is distinguished from the baptism of St. John, who came to bear witness of Him, by this essential difference, that He baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with fire. We are from that time endued with an inward power, illuminated with an unearthly light, and quickened to a newness of life, through the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. The sin of the baptized therefore is the more exceeding sinful, because of this peculiar and most blessed gift. But still more does this aggravation of

guilt apply to the confirmed. They are, through the laying on of hands, visited by a fresh and an enlarged outpouring of the Holy Ghost. To them the heavens are again opened. The Holy Ghost again descendeth and resteth upon them. They are endued with the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit,—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and the spirit of holy fear,—is theirs. The very word, confirmation, expresses the greatness, and the results of the gift; it means strengthening; even a divine strength, and an unearthly might in the inner man. They are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. They are become instruments of righteousness; holy to the Lord. Their very bodies are made temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in them; they are set apart for God's service, even as the vessels of the sanctuary.

To all such, therefore, the awful exhortation specially applies; "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." To go to Confirmation with a false promise, is to lie to the Holy Ghost, who is present in that ordinance. It partakes of the character of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, who made an untrue profession before the apostle,

keeping back part of the price, while they professed to offer all. In so doing they "lied not unto men, but unto God." A false profession in Confirmation is like unto this. We promise to offer all in the words we speak, and in the very fact of approaching the ordinance. It is a lie, if the heart does not consent to the full meaning of the promise. The lie is spoken outwardly to the apostle; but inwardly and really the lie is not to him, but to the Holy Ghost, who through the laying on of hands is given. To go forth from Confirmation, and wilfully to break the promise, is to sin against Him who is in us, who quickens, reproveth, inclines, strengthens us to overcome in all temptations. It may not, indeed, be blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, for to blaspheme is to deny His power, to revile His gracious inspirations; but every wilful sin of the confirmed is a sacrilege. It profanes the temple of the Holy Ghost. It grieves Him. It is committed against the warnings of His still small voice. It is a rejection of His influence, a denial of His supreme will. This is the only true view of sin in any one of us. It is committed not only in God's sight, but against all the pleadings and power of the Spirit who dwelleth in us. We are possessed of a most blessed gift, a gift perpetually

renewed even as we seek. We are commanded to stir up the gift that is in us. We could not lightly sin in a church. But is there not a similar guilt, when we sin in our own bodies, which are inhabited by the Holy Ghost; when we ourselves, who sin, have been consecrated for evermore, set apart as spiritual temples to the glory of God? To go to Confirmation hypocritically, is openly to lie to the Holy Ghost. To do evil after it, is to grieve the Spirit. To fall away, is to quench Him; and to quench the Spirit of God within us, is to deny the last hope of life, whether in this world, or in that which is to come.

But, blessed be God, the very Spirit against whom we thus sin, may Himself stir us again to repentance. It is not that a sin against the Holy Ghost may not be repented of, but that, if continued against all the pleadings of the Spirit, it becomes *the* sin that is unpardonable. Through the power of the Holy Spirit alone can there be repentance. But He who is ever long-suffering with us, who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax,—who has bid even *us* to forgive a brother that trespasses against us, though he trespass seventy times seven, if he turn and repent, will not reject us,

if after even more than seventy times seven offences, we turn to Him. Nay, He will Himself not wait for our return, but will follow us, still abide within us, waiting to be gracious; still speak within us, exhorting us, pleading with us, beseeching us; will stir us up even from our deathlike slumber. Our sorrows, our vexations, the constant crosses that meet us in our path, the bitterness which at times enters into our soul, sickness, worldly losses, are in fact the chastenings of that good Spirit, who thus knocks at our heart, who would thus humble us, thus wean us from the world; thus cause to wither all our earthly hopes, only that He may draw us to the knowledge of our true and abiding bliss. The very Spirit against whom we thus continually sin, Himself ever seeks to draw us to repentance. There is then no cause for despair, while there is a capacity for repentance. The mere desire to repent is a proof that our sin is not unpardonable. The longing is in truth a living inspiration of the blessed Spirit. It is His own voice within us pleading with God. It is Himself, within the depth of our nothingness, crying unto the depth of His own pity. How then is it possible, but that there should be hope for us, when He Himself, against whom we have sinned,

is thus the means of our reconciliation? Only let us seek before it be too late, that the sins which have indeed brought us to such danger be repented of, while the day of salvation lasteth. We know not how soon the day of our visitation may be here. We may delay till the things which belong to our peace are hid from our eyes.

Let us then beware how we trifle with the inspirations of God. Reverence the sacraments through which the gifts of the Holy Ghost are conveyed. Believe their reality. View them as the consecrated channels through which God imparts Himself to His people. Take heed lest, through unbelief or carelessness, no mighty work of God is done in you. Cherish the dispositions with which we are invited to draw near, that we may receive their inward spiritual life. Nor with less earnest care cherish the inward movements of the good Spirit of God, as they are stirred within the soul. The inspirations of God are not now marked by the miraculous signs that once accompanied them; but they are not less real. God speaks to us in the still small voice heard in the silent depths of the conscience. There we hear the voice that tells us the way wherein we ought to walk, and what we ought to avoid. The sensations of shame, or fear, or remorse,

which we so often experience within; or the scruples which arise, as checks to stay us from evil; or the convictions and desires of good which are awakened,—are the stirrings of the Spirit of God. Let us cherish, ponder, reverence them. Above all, let us obey them. They are intended to lead us on to act. They are impulses to excite us to the fulfilment of our high calling. To avoid the sin against the Holy Ghost, we must follow His blessed guidance, and live according to His will.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

THE HOLY TRINITY TAUGHT BY THE CHURCH.

ST. JOHN iii. 12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

IF we were about to visit the gardens of some great prince, gardens celebrated for their exquisite beauty and for their great extent and variety, we should naturally wish for some guide to direct our steps, and to point out to us in proper order and succession the objects most worthy of our attention. Otherwise, if we were left to ourselves, to wander about at our own choice and pleasure, it is true we might find many lovely spots, many objects that would enchain our admiration, but it is likely also that we should pass over many things that we ought to have seen, perhaps the objects of the highest interest, and should return with a most imperfect knowledge of the garden as a whole.

The garden of Almighty God is His written Word, the Holy Bible. There, as in Eden of old, are things both pleasant to the eye and good for food; there God would have us daily walk, that we may know Him and His holy will. But we may not forget, my brethren, that while it is a garden of exquisite beauty, it is one also of great extent and variety. For consider, What is this Holy Book of which we speak? What is its nature? It contains the account of God's Church or people, either in narrative or prophecy, from the beginning to the end of time, from the Creation to the Judgment. It was written, not at one age or time, but under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, by various persons in various ages, who spake as the needs of the Church in their age required, and as He who taught them opened their mouth. They spake, some in history, some in moral instruction, and some in prophecy; some in open speech, some in type and vision, the Holy Ghost dividing to every man severally as He would. And this wondrous Book, in the wondrous Providence of God written in languages now most difficult to be understood,—in Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek,—has been translated and given to us, each one, by the care of the Church, for our enlightenment.

guidance, and instruction in all things that concern our salvation.

But surely we must all feel as the Ethiopian eunuch did of old, that for the right understanding of this Divine and wondrous Book we need some help, some guide, lest, wandering by ourselves at our own will, we go astray, or at least gain but an imperfect knowledge of that which it is so all-important for us to know. And such a guide our good God has given us. I mean, of course, His holy Church, which He Himself has called "the pillar and ground of the truth." She it is, the Church, that takes us by the hand from our childhood, and leads us gently on to see the wonders of divine truth; first teaching us in her catechisms and creeds, and then in all her round of sacred service unfolding and impressing upon us divine truth, she leads through that wondrous garden of which we have spoken, the holy Scriptures, and points out to us, one by one, each in their order, the objects to which we should give our attention. So that they who follow her guidance will never fail to believe and know all things that are necessary to their salvation.

I fear, my brethren, that many among us do not sufficiently consider how much we are indebted to this guide for the hold that we have

on divine truth : we acknowledge that the Bible is God's gift to us ; we hardly acknowledge sufficiently that the Church is God's gift also.

It may, perchance, tend to deepen this impression and to instruct us at the same time, if on this day I point out to you how the Church is acting as our guide ; how, by the arrangement of her lessons to-day, she is teaching us the great truth which we celebrate, the Holy Trinity, leading us to Holy Scripture, combining its sacred truths, and teaching us to find there that which without her guidance we might have failed to find so clearly revealed, or, as some forsaking her guidance have done, have failed to find it at all.

The first lesson for this morning's service is the first chapter of Genesis, containing the account of the creation of the world. We might ask, What does this chapter teach us of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity ? and why was it specially appointed for to-day ? Let us turn to the 26th verse, and we shall see : " And God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness." What means this speaking in the plural number ? and with whom is Almighty God holding consultation, as it were with an equal ? With whom but with His eternal Word and Spirit. It is the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and

Holy Ghost, shadowed forth in the first page of the Bible; I say shadowed forth, because the mysteries which are clearly revealed to us in the New Testament, were taught only in type, and shadow, and vision, in the Old. The Cross of Christ, the blessed Atonement itself, was taught not otherwise under the law,—I mean not otherwise than in type and figure; it is shadowed out everywhere, in the offering up of Isaac, in the sacrifices of the tabernacle, in the manna, in the serpent on the pole, in the smitten rock; but it is not clearly revealed or written down; such was not God's will. Nor was it His will under the law to reveal otherwise His own eternal and mysterious nature, the Trinity of Persons in the unity of substance; it is revealed to us *there* only in shadow and in type.

Let us turn now to the other lesson, from the Old Testament, the 18th chapter of Genesis. We read: "The Lord appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him."

It was the Lord that appeared, and yet it was three men. What means this?

It is again a shadow of the Trinity in unity, three Persons and one God, and the same mystery is carried on throughout the chapter: the

visitors of Abraham speak sometimes in the singular, and sometimes in the plural number; in verse 9 it is, "they said," and in verse 10, "He said," while the end of the chapter leads us to see that it was none other than Almighty God that spake.

Let us pass on now from the shadows of the Old Testament to the clear revelations of the New. The lesson appointed for the morning service is the 3rd chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the passage to which our attention should be specially directed, is the latter part of the chapter, containing the history of the baptism of our Lord. There the three Persons of the blessed Trinity are revealed to us, each in their separate Person. The Father's voice is heard from heaven, the Son Incarnate is seen on earth, and the Holy Ghost in visible form reveals Himself at the same moment. The heavens were opened then, and henceforth they are opened to us, to know the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The other lesson, taken from the New Testament,—I mean the lesson for the afternoon service,—is the 5th chapter of the 1st Epistle of St. John, and the passage, of course, to which our special attention is directed to-day, is the seventh verse, where it is written, "There are Three that bear

record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One."

This is the simple yet forcible way in which the Church teaches us by combining holy Scripture, but we have not finished her instruction yet; there remain here two most important passages from Scripture, the epistle and the gospel. I call these the most important passages, for while the lessons have often no special and direct purpose, the epistle and gospel always have; they are, as it were, the choice seed-plots of the garden, where the Church plants out for us her best and choicest flowers, each in their season. The portion read as the epistle is taken from the 4th chapter of the Book of the Revelation. In other passages we have heard the mystery revealed on earth, and now we behold with the apostle in vision the mystery in heaven. A throne was set in heaven, and One that sat thereon, and from the throne, lightnings, and thunderings, and voices, and round about the throne four and twenty elders, and four living creatures winged and full of eyes, and they rest not day or night from ceaseless adoration; and this was the burden of the hymn the apostle heard,—“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

Holy, holy, holy, is their cry. Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Ghost, and yet not three Holies, but One Holy.

And now the gospel follows, crowning the instruction we have received with a lesson of its own, the most important lesson of all. It is contained chiefly in the words I have selected for my text.

“If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”

The whole gospel is taken from the 3rd chapter of St. John, and contains the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus, in which He taught him of the heavenly birth of water and the Spirit. But the subject, though it concerned God's dealings with man on earth, was full of mystery and difficulty, and Nicodemus, though we do not find him condemned for unbelief, yet marvelled how these things could be ; it would seem also as if his mind, with no unworthy desire, was craving at the same time for higher knowledge of heavenly things, from Jesus as a Divine teacher. Our Lord seems to signify to him that he was right indeed in supposing Him to be a Divine teacher, and able to inform him of the things of heaven.

“We speak,” He said, “that we do know, and

testify that we have seen," words of like import to those written in another place. "No man hath seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him;" and then He continues: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" As if He had said, I have taught you of God's dealing with man's soul on earth, and it is above your comprehension, you marvel, and know not how to believe; how much more then, if I were to tell you of heavenly things, of the nature and being of God.

The lesson, then, that we learn from the gospel is, that the things of heaven are full of mystery, and beyond our comprehension; that humility is needful to us for the attainment of a right faith, and that if we think to fathom the depths of Divine wisdom by the measure of our own understanding, we are as one who would hold the waters of the great ocean in the hollow of his hand.

I said that the things of God were beyond our understanding, but I did not say contrary to our understanding. God has given us two lights,—the light of reason, and the light of revelation; one light may be greater than the other, as the bright-

ness of the sun surpasses that of a candle ; one may surpass the other, but there is no contradiction between them ; both are lights, both come from God. Thus in the revealed doctrine of the blessed Trinity, we are taught to believe that which is beyond our reason, but not that which is contrary to our reason : we are not taught to believe that three Persons are one Person, or that three Gods are one God ; but that three Persons are one God. Enough of this,—we would not as Christians reason and argue on such matters, but rather worship and adore ; so much it may have been needful to say by reason of gainsayers. But, oh, my brethren, why should we, surrounded with mysteries on every side, stumble at the mysteries of heaven ? The ordinary works of nature about us are mysteries, and above our comprehension ; we do not know, the wisest man does not know, how an ear of corn unfolds, or how the commonest way-side flower is painted with its bright colours. I do not speak now of the mightier powers of nature which encompass us, of which we see as it were but the skirts, and grasp but the utmost limits ; awful and mighty powers they are ; but these we need not enter into ; the commonest things about us are mysteries ; our own nature is a mystery.

Who can tell what himself is, how body and soul make him one man, make him to be what he is? Or who can trace the mysteries of sin and grace in his own heart? Oh child of man, thou art a mystery to thyself, thy whole being is a mystery. What marvel, then, that this Being, who made thee, should be a mystery also; would it not rather be a greater marvel if it were not so?

What thanks then should we render to Almighty God, that amid all the mysteries that surround us, amid the darkness and thick shadows that encompass our steps, He has been pleased in His great mercy to give us a clear revelation of Himself, that we be not as those of old, "who knew not what they worshipped," for "we know what we worship." What thanks, what praise, what worship should we give to His most Holy and ever-to-be-adored Name. Praise to the Father, who made us; praise to the Son, who redeemed us; praise to the Holy Ghost, who regenerated and sanctifieth us. Why, my brethren, are our hearts so dull, that we take not more joy in singing that hymn of praise which the Church so often puts into our lips, the hymn to that thrice Holy Name which fills the courts of heaven with gladness,—that hymn which Chris-

tians have sung from the beginning, which will be their deepening and increasing delight through eternity: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Lastly, remember we for our own special guidance, that God will lead the pure-hearted and the teachable into His truth, while the wise in their own conceit shall go astray.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” into the heights of His wisdom: “he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.” And what is that way in which “the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not go astray?” It is the path “of holiness.” Strive we to walk in this path, praying ever as the Collect to-day teaches us, “that He would keep us stedfast in this faith;” that He who wrote the same for us in Scripture,—I mean the Holy Spirit,—would write it also in our hearts unto eternal life.

And now to God the Father, who hath made us; to God the Son, who hath redeemed us; to God the Holy Ghost, who hath regenerated us; to the Holy, Blessed, and Undivided Trinity be ascribed, &c.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE VICTORIES OF FAITH.

ROMANS viii. 37. *In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.*

WE are now entering on the Sundays after Trinity; these open to us a new class of subjects. In order to understand them fully, we must go back to a guide with which we must all be well acquainted,—our Catechism.

The promises of our baptism are:—

First, that we should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

Secondly, that we should believe all the articles of our Christian faith.

Thirdly, that we should keep God's holy will and Commandments. That is to say:—

1. Repentance.
2. Faith.

3. Obedience.

Mark the order in which these come; it is not accidental,—it is the same as that of St. John the Baptist, who tells his hearers,—1, to repent; 2, to be baptized; 3, to do works meet for repentance.

And now observe from this the teaching of the Church. Christmas, Good-Friday, Easter, Ascension-day, Whit-Sunday and Trinity, are the grand points of our faith; those leading doctrines of our religion which as Christians we are called upon to believe; unless we do believe them fully and unreservedly, we are not Christians; if we do believe them fully and unreservedly, they become the means of grace to us: they are sometimes called also “the faith,” simply because our Lord has made faith the indispensable condition of our receiving them: “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” But these do not come first in the Church’s teaching; they are not placed abruptly before the unprepared mind, they are preceded by the seasons of Advent and Lent, just as the Baptist came before the Saviour, in order that “every valley should be filled, and every mountain and hill be brought low, and the crooked be made straight, and the rough places be made smooth:”

Then, and not before, “all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

First, then, came repentance; then came faith.

Similarly,—“It is expedient for you that I go away,” said our Saviour: “for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

Therefore trust in Christ precedes strength through the Holy Ghost. This, therefore, gives us the order:—

1. Preparing the ground.—1. Repentance.
2. The Sowing.—2. Grace through Faith.
3. The Harvest.—3. The fruits of Faith.

And this we find is actually the teaching of the Church.

But repentance and faith have been fully treated of in the preceding portions of the year. The man of God is supposed by this time to be thoroughly furnished unto all good works,—what we are now considering therefore is not the Cross, but the victories of the Cross; the fruit of these things; works done in faith by means of grace.

Therefore it is that the system of proper lessons changes from the precepts of the doc-

trinal books of Moses, which have occupied us since Easter, to the typical victories of Joshua over the nations of Canaan.

Do not let me be misunderstood when I use the word "typical;" these were really historical facts; they really did happen. Joshua did lead the children of Israel triumphantly into the promised land; he did conquer and cast out the heathen; he did establish God's people in their place.

But God can teach by deeds done, as well as by words spoken.

That the walls of Jericho, as soon as the people were fully prepared to assault them, fell without the stroke of the sword or the strength of man, is a real fact; but this, fact as it is, shews us clearly, that in the conquest over ourselves, to which we are now called, the Lord is able to fight for us, and does fight for us, when He sees us fully prepared, and willing, and obedient; and that, as a matter of necessity, He does not *need* a stroke of ours in the battle.

But this is only the beginning of the war: the Lord shews us first that He does not need our help; He then is pleased to use our help, to make us as it were His fellow-workers; the walls of Jericho fell flat at the trumpet-call of

God's priests. It is as if He said, The Lord has struck the first stroke for you, now enter and fight the Lord's battles for yourselves. That several wicked nations did dwell in the land which the Lord had chosen and hallowed for Himself, and that they were cast out before His people, is a matter of history; but it is no less a type of what actually happens in the heart of him whom Christ has chosen or dedicated wholly to Himself. Canaan is the type of the unregenerate nature of man taken possession of by the Lord Jesus, of whom the Joshua or Jesus of the Old Testament is the type; and the nations who dwelt in it are the pride, and lust, and cruelty, and other vices, with which no terms can be made; which are to be utterly destroyed and rooted out; which, if permitted to remain on any terms, are sure to lead away the mind from God.

On this first Sunday after Trinity, the Church places before us the war proclaimed against Israel by the five kings, on account of the favour shewed by Joshua to the Gibeonites. These Gibeonites, you will remember, were, like the other nations, natives of that land which was henceforward to be dedicated to God, and, like them, had received their doom. They, however,

approached humbly to the camp at Gilgal, and, under the pretext that they were but distantly connected with the wicked nations of the land, succeeded in effecting an alliance, and this, having been sworn to in the name of God, might not be broken by His people.

The Gibeonites, therefore, were still permitted to dwell in the Holy Land, and were received under the covenanted protection of its laws ; but under a condition. They were to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord. To this they willingly submitted themselves : "Behold," they said, "we are in thy hand ; as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do."

If the Land of Canaan signify the unregenerate nature of man in the act of being sanctified and regenerated by the Lord ; if the inhabitants of that land, who are doomed to utter destruction, signify the sins and vices which are utterly incompatible with the presence of Christ,—then these Gibeonites will typify the natural affections, which indeed belong to our unregenerate nature, which indeed are closely allied to its wicked inhabitants, far more closely than they would have it appear,—Love with Lust, Courage with Cruelty, Tenderness with Injustice and Par-

tiality,—yet, forasmuch as these are willing to acknowledge the law of Christ, and are anxiously desiring to cleave to Him, and to renounce their natural alliances, they are permitted to dwell even in the regenerate heart; but not as independent, still less as masters. They dwell, indeed, now under the protection of the blessed Lord; they have a right to claim His grace and His defence as much as the Christian graces themselves, but it is now in a state of subordination to the heaven-born inhabitants of the regenerate heart; they are hewers of wood and drawers of water to the holier affections: “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me;” still they are suffered to minister to the altar of the Lord, and as the Lord’s servants they are hallowed. To use the Gospel illustration of the same occurrence, the strong man armed has been holding his palace, these his goods have hitherto been at peace, that is, all his own; but the *stronger than he* has now not only overcome him, but has divided, that is to say, appropriated to his own service, his spoils. The recovery of these goods is the object of the Lord’s enemies, and thus it is that we find, in the first lesson for this morning’s service, the alliance of the five kings for the recovery of the revolted Gibeonites;

but the Gibeonites are already under the protection of the Lord, and have a right by covenant to claim it at their need; they send therefore to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, saying, "Slack not thine hand from thy *servants*, come up to us quickly, and help us, and save us, for all the kings of the Amorites are gathered together against us."

You will observe that Joshua went readily, and with his whole force; that when he had done so, the Lord encouraged him; that this discomfiture of the enemy was worked through his own personal exertions, and those of his army; and that after this had been effected, the Lord Himself worked two special miracles, both independent of human aid, for the extirpation of the already defeated hosts.

The whole of this sequence is to be closely observed.

Our natural affections, which we, members of Christ as we are, have been permitted to retain, are assailed, and are in danger; we, with our whole force and our whole exertion, are to go to their rescue; we are not to expect so much as comfort or encouragement from God, till we have done so, but having done so, we do meet with encouragement; we then enter into the

battle with courage and constancy ; we are liable also to the same loss, and pain, and wounds, and afflictions, during the course of the conflict, which attend, and must attend, every victorious army ; the Lord does not as yet fight *for* us, but *with* us, and *through* us, but when in His might we have conquered, then He shews forth His presence more evidently, and works even a miracle in order that our conquest may be permanent and effectual : “ they were more which died with the hailstones, than they which the children of Israel slew with the sword.”

The five kings, stripped of their earthly power and majesty, are exhibited in their real and natural meanness, and the captains of the deliverer’s army—the leaders of our heavenly affections and aspirations—are bidden to set their feet upon the necks of those who have hitherto been the kings of the land now regenerate, (to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, as St. Paul says,—to *make it their slave*, as the word is more properly translated,) and then utterly to extirpate them ; to hang them on trees, to “ crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts,” as St. Paul expresses the very same act, until “ the going down of the sun,” until the end of life, until the Lord’s chosen are permitted to rest from their labours.

But this is not the whole of the lesson,—till we look at the antitype, we may well wonder that the Church has gone on with the chapter, and read in our ears the mere unornamented narrative of the marches and victories of Joshua, which conclude it. The historian would say, that feeling himself in a position to take advantage of the panic caused by the defeat of such powerful adversaries, Joshua marched through the country, reducing the fortified places, and establishing his conquests; and so he did, for this is history as well as doctrine; but is there not a lesson which the regenerate Christian may learn from it? Is the time of the great victory, which by God's grace we have achieved over some bold aggression of our carnal wills, to be for us a time of rest? is not the time of such a victory precisely, not only the opportunity, but the means of consolidating and turning to profit the advantage we have gained? is it not the time to go through the whole land, indefatigably searching out, unrelentingly exterminating every germ, which may now indeed be taken at advantage and be rooted out, but which, if it be passed by and neglected, has all the power and all the inclination to establish itself again into an antagonist kingdom?

“And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp, to Gilgal.” In other words, after all this course of continued victories, Joshua did not disband his army, or relax his watchfulness; he resumed the position he had occupied before the call of the Gibeonites.

Let us remember what Gilgal was; it was the first position occupied by the ark of God, and the people under its protection, when, having crossed the water, they had entered upon the promised land;—does not this put us in mind of the prayer in baptism, “to lead the rest of his life *according to this beginning?*” victorious as we may be in our spiritual warfare, our return must always be to this point, our watch must always be kept from it,—“our return must be,” says one, “not only to the covenant of God which He has made with us in Christ, but to the place in which it was made, and that is His Church. The Church is our Christian camp, and baptism is the fence that surrounds it; whatever excursions we make thither, we must still return and keep ever close to our baptismal vow, of which Gilgal is the noted emblem and representation.”

This, therefore, is our first practical lesson on the fruits of faith; whatever is born of God, overcometh the world. If we have been fully

armed for Christ's service ; if, during the doctrinal part of the Church's teaching, we have put on that armour, which is ours by baptism ; if we stand having our loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace ; if we have taken the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, we are to fight, not to repose. The sword of the Spirit is useless in its sheath, the shield of faith is a burthen rather than a defence, if it hang idly by our side. We, "harnessed and carrying bows," are here shewn our first battle-field, and it is in our own souls, the soil of the holy land itself. We fight with the Lord's weapons, with them we cast out the invaders of the Lord's own hallowed territory, the Lord fights first with us, then for us, and by our watchfulness we see that we lose not the fruits of the victory we have won.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BRINGING IN TO THE FEAST.

ST. LUKE XIV. 23. *Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*

THE manner in which our Lord drew out from the remarks of ordinary conversation, not instruction only, but doctrinal points also, and prophetic revelation, is shewn beautifully by this day's gospel.

He was giving His disciples a lesson in self-denial and charity,—“Thou, when thou makest a feast, call not those who can bid thee again, but the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just,”—when one who sat at meat with them, struck with the glorious vision which passed before his mind, exclaimed, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom

of God ; blessed is he, who, instead of the entertainment they were then enjoying, and which had given the subject for their discourse, shall be admitted to that heavenly banquet, where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.

This remark, which was a very natural one under these circumstances, introduces this day's gospel, the parable of the marriage supper. It seems that our Lord assented to the truth of the observation generally, but doubted whether the man understood what the kingdom of God, that he spoke of, really was ; as if he should say, It is most true,—Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God : but the kingdom of God is already at hand ; the banquet or marriage-feast is already prepared, and who is ready to eat of it ? Who hath believed our report ? how is it with you and the rest of the world ? the invitation is given,—but are you willing to receive it ? judge for yourselves. A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, and he sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.

The certain man is God ; they that were bidden in this case means the Jews, who had so often been bidden by the prophets. “ The ser-

vant who was sent," said an ancient father, "is Christ Himself; who, being by nature God, and true Son of God, put off the Godhead, and took upon Him the form of a servant. He was sent at supper-time; for not in the beginning of the world did God take upon Him our nature, but in these last times,—he adds, you see, the words 'for all things are now ready.' The Father had prepared in Christ the good things bestowed on the world through Him,—the removal of sins, the partaking of the Holy Spirit, the glory of adoption."

The banquet, or marriage feast itself, is of course the Body and Blood of our blessed Saviour, by means of which all these things are given. To this Christ bade men by the teaching of the Gospel.

All things are now ready,—the kingdom of heaven is at hand,—the Son of Man is about to open that kingdom to all believers,—the predicted Deliverer is born,—the glad tidings are revealed,—the promises are fulfilled,—the prophecies are receiving their accomplishment,—all things are now ready,—come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Such was the invitation. Now, then, we might

suppose that all would hasten and thankfully meet it; we *might* suppose it, did not our own consciences accuse us of slighting so often that very same invitation, and of choosing, with all our sins upon our shoulders, and all our natural weakness in bearing them, to turn our back upon our Saviour, even as they did, and to busy ourselves with the cares of the world.

They, like us, all with one consent, “began to make excuse: the first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it, I pray thee have me excused; and another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused; another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”

We need not stop now to consider that these are the types of the world, which at our baptism we profess to renounce; the things which are represented here as keeping men at a distance from God, and preventing their return to Him, are not represented as things sinful in themselves, but things needful and proper,—the lawful concerns, the indispensable business, the ordinary transactions of life. Many, no doubt, perish through open transgression, and bold defiance of God’s law, but their case is plain enough, and

the parable leads us to suppose all that ; but the awful consideration which it sets before us is, that there are many *also* who perish by things which no law forbids, which they might justly and unblameably have done, had they not, for their sakes, left undone things still more needful.

Such was the conduct of the people at that time ; as it had been in the days of Noah, the preacher of righteousness, so it was also in the days of Him, of whom that preacher of righteousness was a type ; they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ; the things of this world so occupied their hearts, that they gave no heed to the message even then sounding in their ears, which said, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And judging from what has been the case, and from what is the case, there is great reason to fear that so it will be, even to the end. The great majority of all who hear the invitation, Come, for all things are now ready, will be so engrossed with the things of this world, that the things eternal will have no value for them ; they will not lay hold on eternal life ; they will neglect the treasure hid in the field, for the treasure that is before their eyes ; they will not quit the trifles they are catching at, for the pearl of great

price, which lies beyond the surface of this present world.

May God increase in us that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

“So that servant came and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servants, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” “He invites the poor, and the weak, and the blind,” said a holy bishop, “to shew us that poverty and weakness of body shut no one from the kingdom of heaven; because the proud refused to come, the poor are invited: those are here called weak and poor, who are weak and poor in their own judgment of themselves; the blind are those who have no natural brightness of understanding; the lame are they who have not walked uprightly in their works.” By these, (which, we may observe, are all natural defects,) are signified sins of infirmities, sins belonging to our corrupt nature, what we should speak of as the general consequences of original sin; whereas the faults of the others arise from their own pride and negligence, and shew what we should call wilful and actual sins; those were sinners,

who, when bidden, refused to come ; those also were sinners, who, when invited, did come ; but the proud sinners are rejected, and the humble are chosen.

“And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.”

This is the part which particularly applies to us. When the Lord calls men from the streets and lanes of the city, He points out that people who had already learnt in *His chosen nation*, to observe the practice of the law, such, for instance, as the Galileans and Samaritans. These were the first called after the invitation to the marriage supper had been slighted by that chosen nation, to whom the invitation had been first offered ; but there was yet room ; and now the guests are sought from without the city.

These, then, are the Gentiles, ourselves,—a people who were without the city, unchosen, untaught, but who now are invited to the marriage feast, and are made equal with those chosen from the beginning.

“For I say unto you, that none of those which were bidden shall taste of my supper.” Here a doom is passed upon the unbelieving Jews of that day, of which the sentence passed upon

those in the wilderness was a type and a prophecy: "I swear in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest." Grace despised is grace forfeited.

The Jewish people were disinherited. As a nation they lost the favour of God; because of their unbelief they were broken off as branches that bore no fruit, and the Gentiles, who received the Word of God with joy, and repented, and embraced the faith of Christ, these were grafted in. Justly may we say with the apostle, "Behold, then, the goodness and severity of God; towards them that fell, severity, but towards thee goodness, *if thou continue in this goodness.*" The goodness of God, in sending out His servants, the apostles, to the highways and hedges of the world, to fetch in such as we, who had no claim upon His mercy, is evident enough; but St. Paul tells us that this goodness is towards us only if we continue in this goodness, implying clearly, that if we do not, we shall partake in the severity shewn to the first invited; this he says more clearly in another place, where he compares *them* to the natural branches of an olive tree, and *us* to engrafted branches, and then warns us that if God spared not the natural branches, He is

not likely to spare us, who are only engrafted after all, if we bring forth no more fruit than they did.

Now the whole scheme of man's redemption is well known to you, so far as understanding goes. The Church considers that all its points have been laid before you in succession, on the different Sundays which compose the doctrinal part of the year; she imagines that you have had time to receive them, and means to comprehend them, and now that you have them all before you, she gives you this parable, which certainly suits us now as well as ever it did the Jews then; and by it she says to us Christians, These are the means whereby salvation has been offered to you,—these are the conditions under which you have been admitted to the wedding supper; now see that you do not neglect them. You are now among those that have been bidden, come in, accept that which is offered, do that which is commanded, lest the sentence be passed upon you which was passed upon those bidden before you,—“None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

“And yet there is room.” Let these words unfold to us a duty we have too much neglected;

God's house is not full yet, and every day we pray that His kingdom may come; surely we are called upon to act up to our prayers; every one who feels himself admitted, is in sort a servant commissioned to bring in others. Have we all acted up to this in our own parish? has every one, who is a regular worshipper in this place, done his best to bring his friends here? has every one who is a partaker of the Holy Communion remembered that yet there is room for his relations, who, being bidden to the feast, as well as he, have hitherto made light of it? have those who have felt for themselves the benefit of daily service, done their best to convince others similarly situated? There is yet room at the marriage-feast; God's kingdom is not full; even in this parish His kingdom may be extended,—and surely those cannot be in earnest who pray that His kingdom may come, and who do nothing to keep even His sworn subjects to their duty. Why need we talk of missionary societies? you are all missionaries; every one who feels the benefit of God's grace is a missionary to his neighbours who do not.

But there is also a literal sense in which we may take the words, there is yet room;—there is

room in God's kingdom for many who have never known His name, and a door is opened for the admission of other Gentiles to the feast, even as some centuries ago it was opened to us; surely, then, in that sense we are called upon to go out into the lanes and hedges, and to compel them to come in.

This is a very serious part of the subject, and one which I am afraid we have a good deal neglected, but we have not time to go into it now. In the mean time let us exercise ourselves in the obvious duty of extending God's kingdom among our own friends and neighbours, remembering that he "that converteth one from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

And let us ourselves repent in time of all the negligences of which we have been guilty, taking to our comfort the assurance, that though we have been bidden, though hitherto we have not been worthy of the invitation, and have refused to listen to the voice of God's servants, the door is not yet finally closed, that yet there is room, that it is God's will that all should come to repentance and knowledge of His Word, and that it is not till every means has been exhausted, till the Spirit of God, time after time,

has been done despite to, and is finally quenched and removed, until mercy has been long despised, and grace neglected, that the awful sentence is at last pronounced, "None of those men that were bidden shall taste of My supper."

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN EVIL TIMES.

1 SAM. i. 3. *And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there.*

THE proper lessons for the Sundays at this season introduce us to the history of the chosen people of God, when the government under the judges was drawing to a close, and when a new state of things was springing up under Samuel and the kings. It was a dreary time, religiously considered. When we read the later chapters of the Book of Judges, and then at the beginning of the Book of Samuel, the picture put before us is indeed gloomy: it is a time of great irreligion and corruption; of the worship of God profaned and neglected; of His sanctuary corrupted; yet still it is one which, rightly considered, may prove most useful to us.

The history of this day's lessons exhibits two main points. 1. The general wickedness and irreligion that prevailed; corruption which extended even to the ministers of God, and made what ought to have been the wellspring of holiness the source of the greatest evil.

2. But besides, it shews us that in this season of great wickedness God had His true servants, who clung to Him and observed His law; who were loved and cared for by Him; and it points out the means by which they grew up to the greatest grace and holiness.

It is the lesson that there is light amid darkness; that an apparently universal corruption prevailing throughout the Church, does not hinder each man from finding God's grace in His appointed ordinances. Most beautifully do these narratives of personal and domestic life beam out amid the gloom of public sins and general corruption. It was under the cruel rule of the Philistines, and the evils that then prevailed, that we see the simple life of Ruth and Naomi. It was, as we shall see, when Hophni and Phinehas were the ministering priests, and were driving away the worshippers from the temple of God by their profaneness, and surrounding the courts of the Lord with the foul abominations of hea-

thenism, that there shines forth before us the faithful devotion of Elkanah, the humble piety and faith of Hannah, and the boy Samuel nourished up, a saint in the midst of sinners. The Lord hath His own people, hidden from the eyes of the world, unfolding and ripening in grace, though unknown and unthought of by those among whom they lived.

Surely these bright spots amid the general evil, are as when we look out and behold the whole sky covered with one mass of black and heavy clouds, and the whole landscape, all the fields, and trees, and hills, overshadowed with gloom,—only here and there a single ray of sunshine lighting up some quiet home or church, and shewing us that the sun is there, still the same in power and brightness.

Let us consider what the state of the chosen people actually was. God gave the Israelites a holy law, and appointed ordinances of divine service. There was the tabernacle, where they were to go up to worship at the appointed feasts; and those feasts themselves which were to be a continual remembrance of what He had done for them. There were priests appointed to minister in their courses, and to offer thank-offerings and sacrifices to God, to shew the thankfulness of the people,

or as an atonement for their sins. Now this holy law, and these ordinances, if they had been duly observed, would have made the Israelites a religious and a happy people,—virtue, and peace, and prosperity was pledged to them. But they soon broke through God's appointment: they felt His service a bondage, and the whole Book of Judges is the record of their rebellions. The Book of Samuel lays open a still worse scene. It exhibits the corruption and wickedness of the priests themselves, of those who ought to have been the guides and intercessors for the people.

I need scarcely remind you of the wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, the aged high-priest. We are told in the two chapters read to-day, that they were sons of Belial, when they ought to have been, not sons of God only, but holy priests of God. They were covetous and rapacious, extorting from the people more offerings than they had a right to; they were profane themselves, and forced others to be profane; for whereas it was right that the offering should first be made to God, and burnt upon the altar,—by which God, if we may so say, was first served; that next the priests' share should be given, and then the people should have the rest;—these

priests would have their share first,—they would not have the flesh after it was boiled, but raw ; they would not wait till the fat was burned in God's honour, but would take their portion first. Now what was the effect of this? why, that men would not go to make their offerings to God at all. They rejected God's service because His ministers were evil men. The wickedness of these priests made men abhor the service of the House of God. Persons that are even in a certain sense religious, often feel the wickedness of priests more than those who have no care for religion. These evil deeds of the sons of Eli drove men away, perhaps even men of some religion, from God's service. Indeed, their abominations were even worse than the rapacity and profaneness of which we have spoken "They lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle;" adding to their other sins the corrupting of those who came around the House of God, making the temple of the Most Holy like that of some heathen idol, whose worship was surrounded by impurity. Thus did they cause the Lord's people to transgress,—His own people, for whose good and salvation they were set to minister. These sons of Eli stand out as awful types of those clergy who by their irreverence and irre-

ligion bring the services and sacraments of the Church into contempt; so that men will give the wickedness of the priest as a reason for neglecting the appointed service of God.

Such was the condition of the people of Israel at this time,—general national disobedience and rebellion; the clergy, as we should call them, utterly corrupt themselves, and corrupting others, causing them to sin, and being the occasion of their abominating the religious services in which those persons took a part; and Eli, as you know,—he who ought by strict discipline to have restrained them,—leaving them to themselves with only slight and easy words of warning, and the people generally neglecting that worship which Almighty God had appointed for them. The Law seemed to have failed. It was, as it were, a dead letter. The priesthood was corrupt. The whole face of religion was destroyed. The House of God was a scene of wickedness, and they who ought to have been worshipping there, turned away. Now it may be useful to consider how an individual who feared God ought to act in such a state of general religious corruption, and what course of conduct will be most blessed by God and conducive to his soul's health.

I need not tell you, my brethren, how com-

mon it is to find persons alleging even the faults of clergymen—not to speak of their sins—as a sufficient reason for forsaking their Church, neglecting her ordinances, and even following new forms of religion, and opposing the Church. They seem even to think that it is right to do so, and to make a boast of doing it. And such a state of things is full of discouragement and difficulty to all.

The Old Testament, I need not say, was given us for our guidance in such cases. It comes in the form of history, to shew us, by the conduct of others, how we ought to act. And to make the lesson complete, we have set before us such evil times as it might have been our own lot to fall on,—times of predominant wickedness, when the corruption which prevails makes the path of duty obscure.

Let us then pass from the view of the wickedness of the priests, and the neglect of religion by the people generally, into the view of the quiet course of life of one single family. Let us see how they acted, and how God approved and blessed their conduct.

We have the opportunity of doing this in the history of Elkanah and Hannah, the father and mother of Samuel, and in that of Samuel himself. We see in them a holy family,—a small

body of true and sincere servants of God—who sought Him in His house, and in the worship of His sanctuary, when people generally abhorred that service, and when the service itself was desecrated by the wickedness of the priests.

The text brings these two facts close together, side by side, as if it were intended to teach us a lesson by their connexion. “This man went up yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there.”

That is, at the very time during which Hophni and Phinehas,—they whose wickedness was so great in the eye of the Lord, as to be almost unpardonable,—they who made the Lord’s people to offend,—they whose rapacity and scandalous conduct were known by all, and so offensive to all, —were the priests that ministered; at this very time Elkanah did not cease to go year by year, at the due appointed season, according to the law of the Lord, to worship in Shiloh, i. e. the place where the tabernacle and the ark of God were. He went up as the law ordered, year by year, to offer sacrifice there. That is to say, Elkanah did not depart from his duty, and from the law which God had laid down, because of

the wickedness of the priests. His wife, too, in the bitterness of her heart, went to pray in the temple,—she went up to that house which was defiled by the sin of the priests; and when Eli, the easy and negligent high-priest, saw her praying with so much excitement of manner, that he suspected her of drunkenness, she was not driven away, nor did she answer sharply, but humbly told him of her sorrow,—speaking to him as being the true priest of God,—though he seemed to have no power of sympathizing with her; and the good result, as you know, was that her prayer was answered.

Nay, more, it was to serve God in this very tabernacle that she devoted the son who was the fruit of prayer. She gave up her boy to minister there,—being a child girt with a linen ephod,—and she made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Samuel grew before the Lord, and was in favour with the Lord, and with men.

What I would have you observe is, that Elkanah did not give up going to the temple because the priests were wicked. He sought God there; and God will be found of them that seek Him in every place where He has promised to be present.

Elkanah and Hannah did not judge or speak reproachfully of the priests, nor did Hannah answer again when she was—however unjustly—reproved. They treated Eli with deference and respect. They continued in their own right course of seeking God in His appointed ordinances, notwithstanding the evil which seemed to have infected the whole system of which those ordinances were a part.

And they were blest in doing so. Their own prayers were heard,—heard beyond all they could have looked for. Hannah was blest with a son; she was taught of God so as to be enabled to praise Him with a song, which has its place in holy Scripture, and is prophetic of Christ and the Christian Church. Her son was trained up by the Spirit of God, and guarded so as to be holy among the unholy, and was made the special instrument of God for the delivering of His people.

Nor is the case of Elkanah and Hannah a single or peculiar one. The gospel history opens with one very like it. The Jewish Church in the time of our Saviour was most corrupt. The ordinances of God for the appointment of the high-priest were broken, great irregularities prevailed; Sadducees who did not believe, ministered as priests; and of the sinful Pharisees, our Lord

said, "do not after their works, but because they sit in Moses' seat, obey them." Now at the beginning of the gospel, notwithstanding this corruption, we find the holy Zacharias, the father of St. John the Baptist, ministering as a priest in his course, and he and Elizabeth, and the blessed Virgin, and their friends, faithful servants of God. And most constant in their attendance in the temple, and in prayer and fasting, were Simeon and Anna, who were blest with special revelation, and allowed to see the Christ.

In the darkest and worst times, in those places in the Church which are under the greatest disadvantage, God has those whom He has marked for Himself: they are led by His Spirit and enlightened by Him, guided and kept by Him,—and where are they to be found? In the Church of God, faithful in cleaving to the Lord in their attendance there, notwithstanding the evils which seem to reign in it. And they are blessed,—blessed in God's present favour; blessed, it may be, even more in His making them or their children the means of restoring the Church to its own proper purity and glory.

Be it ours then, my brethren, not to dwell in complaints on the evils that prevail around us; not to utter reproachful words against others, but

to go on in our own appointed course, knowing that in all ordinary matters the course of duty is the same in evil times as in good times : there is the same Church, the same prayers, the same psalms sung as by the saints of old ; the same sacraments, where Christ is ever present ; the same pledged blessings from Almighty God ; and by attending to our own souls, endeavouring to become more pure, more humble, more decided in doing what we know is right, our way will become more and more clear, even in the darkest night of this world, till the day-spring arise upon us.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

DISAPPOINTMENT AND FAILURE.

1 SAM. xii. 2, 3. *And now, behold, the king walketh before you : and I am old and grayheaded ; and behold my sons are with you : and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am : witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed.*

THERE are few portions of holy Scripture more marked by simple and pathetic eloquence, than that farewell address of Samuel on retiring from the exercise of his duties as the judge of Israel, which was read this morning. A week ago we read of him as the child of prayer, devoted by his parents to the service of God, and trained up within the holy precincts of the tabernacle, and called to be a prophet. Brought up thus from his childhood, his whole life, till he was old and grayheaded, had been spent in the service of his country. He had been the prophet, the preacher

of repentance, the reformer of his countrymen ; he had been their successful leader in throwing off the yoke of the Philistines,—a diligent, upright, faithful judge. And now, under one of those changes of feeling to which a fickle people are ever liable, he is set aside,—his past services are forgotten, his divine commission undervalued,—he is superseded, that they may have a king like the nations round about them ; and he lives to see his work amongst them seemingly fail entirely.

The history of Samuel is a remarkable instance of what we may almost regard as a law of God's dealings in the case of those of His most eminent servants, who are called to do great works for the benefit of His Church,—in that they are themselves undervalued or rejected ; and that they do not in their own time behold the fruits of their labours, but rather see them apparently failing.

Opposition, discouragement, successive failures, ultimate disappointment, is the lot of those who labour for the Lord ; the full glorious fruit of their labours here on earth is the portion of those who come after them.

Men do not repose under the shadow of the trees they have themselves planted. The first

settlers in a new country endure hardships in subduing those fields in which their children live at ease. Still more, when the benefactors of mankind are labouring for moral improvements amongst their brethren, they have to struggle on through a whole life, it may be, in the maintenance of that which they know in their own souls to be a great truth, or for the effecting of what they know to be a great good. Weariness, sickness of heart, hopes excited only to be disappointed, are the portion in this life of those who would benefit their brethren.

I would consider this as it is exhibited in the history of Samuel. The work of Samuel was twofold:—1. What he did in his own lifetime, whether as a judge, or as a prophet; 2. What he did by instituting an abiding body of prophets to be the instructors and religious guides of the people.

The first of these works seemed to have utterly failed; of the second, the fruits had scarcely appeared during his own lifetime. So that, as far as visible results went, his labours had been to all appearance in vain. Disappointment and seemingly fruitless labour was his portion.

Yet of Samuel it has been said, that he may almost be called a second Moses. The results

of his ministry were as great, and the effects of his institutions as permanent. He himself began what has been called a new dispensation,—the ministry of the prophets. In the law itself, no exact provision was made for the religious instruction of the people. Its ritual was indeed a visible lesson to those who were disposed to learn it. Every seventh year the law was to be read at the Feast of Tabernacles. The teaching of the people was in general terms assigned to the Levites, who were fixed in their several cities throughout the tribes; and that suggestion of nature, that the parents should teach their children, was confirmed by injunctions that they should instruct them in the meaning of the ceremonial ordinances, and inculcate the precepts of the law. But beyond this there was no special provision made. And when Samuel arose, it seemed as if the law had failed. Successive acts of national disobedience, internal disorders, oppressive captivities, irregularity and disorder, prevailed; and the Book of Judges closes in gloom and darkness, only to prepare us for the still deeper gloom with which the Book of Samuel opens. The priesthood corrupted; the people abhorring the religious rites; idolatry widely spread; and a staying of any special interposi-

tion of God : for “the Word of the Lord was precious, i. e. rare, in those days ; there was no open vision.” And as the consequence and the punishment of their sins, the Lord departed from them. “He forsook the tabernacle in Shiloh, even the tent that He had pitched among men.” The symbol of His presence was removed ; and the priests ministered before a deserted sanctuary. And these judgments had fallen upon an indifferent and insensible people. The Philistines oppressed them, and they seemed to be forsaken of God.

Then it was that Samuel was raised up to be a recognised prophet. For more than twenty years, “while the ark was at Kirjath-jearim,” he laboured to bring the people to repentance. The heavy visitations were felt. “All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.” He won them to a public acknowledgment of their sins, and profession of repentance, and to an actual putting away of their false gods ; so that we hear no more of such idolatry for centuries after. They were delivered from foreign oppression ; and the zeal and uprightness of Samuel redressed wrongs and irregularities among themselves.

Meanwhile he was laying the foundation of an institute which provided for the continuance of

religious teaching, and afforded homes and centres for religious men to draw to when he was himself removed. That this work was begun whilst he was first labouring for the reformation of the people, and thus was a means by which the great change was effected, is most probable, from the fact that at the time of the first meeting of Saul and Samuel, the prophets were already associated together, and were recognised as a distinct class by the people,—as an order of men visibly distinguished from the rest. During that period of great outward affliction, and of still greater loss of religious privileges, when the glory of the Lord had departed, and the fading honour of the priesthood, and the ruin of the established worship, seemed to open a way for a new order of things,—Samuel gathered together religious men into societies, in comparative separation from the world, to give themselves up to devotional exercises, and to the teaching of the people.

Such was the institution of the prophets; it raised up and preserved a body of persons whose office it was to teach, to admonish, and to reprove; to maintain the great truth of the unity of God, and of the exclusive worship due to Him;

to remonstrate against the vices of their age, and to reprove kings and people alike.

The prophetic system has been called a new dispensation, in relation to the law, and the familiar expression, "the law and the prophets," may confirm the idea. It was a new, but a subordinate, dispensation: new, in that it arose long after the law, and was nowise provided in it, and took a distinct work,—the instruction of the people, for which the law had made no provision, not interfering with the duties of the priesthood, from which it was quite distinct, but working independently of them. It proved also the means of bringing out, in the specially inspired prophets, a fulness of spiritual teaching which went beyond what was written in the law, and produced those most sacred portions of the inspired volume.

The author of this great work was the prophet Samuel. But how little did he see of the good that it effected!

That some immediate good indeed followed from it is plain, from the practical reformation which was effected, which, notwithstanding the reaction under Saul, appears to have spread and leavened the whole people; to have disposed them to receive as their king him whom

God had chosen. And hence the religious temper which appears to have prevailed under David and Solomon ; and, as the fruit of this, the public recognition of religion, and the temporal peace and glory, which followed : the joyous bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem by David ; the abundant offerings for the temple ; the popularity of Solomon, the chosen of God ; the glorious solemnity of the dedication of the temple, with its sublime services, and courts crowded with devout worshippers.

But these fruits of his works Samuel did not see ; they shewed themselves when he was dead and buried. His own portion was disappointment and seeming failure. The people whom he had converted, and won from sin and misery, rejected him. He was displaced from their love and confidence. His popularity departed, and another was to take his place. He himself was set aside as a useless broken vessel. But he suffered not so much from the acute sense of their ingratitude, as from seeing the good he had wrought undone ; he beheld the prospect of future evil, and actually lived to witness it. The returning cruel oppression of the Philistines, shaken off, indeed, but yet leading to continual warfare and consequent distress, the wilfulness of

Saul, whom he regarded with a father's love ; the sight of his sin, and the duty put upon himself of announcing that God had rejected him, and taken away the kingdom from him, of which we read next Sunday ; the living on as the witness of his deepening misery and deepening sin ; the persecution of David, his acts of insane tyranny, and at last the massacre of the priests. So that the very outward semblance of the institutions of God, the special glory and privilege of his people, was destroyed : the ark banished from Shiloh ; the priests slaughtered ; the Urim and Thummim removed ; no ritual worship celebrated ; no appointed expiation effected ; no day of atonement ; no scapegoat ; no feast of joy,—all was one dead blank, as if the true religion was extirpated, and the law had altogether failed.

Samuel lived to witness this ; to see his own work undone, and the religious improvement of his countrymen, as far as visible producible results went, apparently at an end. Well might he say, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, “ I have laboured in vain ; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain ;” yet here is his comfort : “ Surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.”

These words express the state of mind which

ought to be entertained by a Christian thus circumstanced.

It is this throwing ourselves and all we do on Him,—trusting that our own sincere desires to do good, notwithstanding our miserable shortcomings, will not be forgotten by Him, and that our works will prosper according to His good pleasure,—which must be the support of those who seem to themselves thus to have laboured in vain, and to have spent their strength for nought and in vain,—to have wrought no deliverance in the earth.

Present visible success is not the measure of the value of our labours, nor to be looked for in the exercise of our ministry. How often, in the case of individuals, have prayers and exhortations seemed to have been wasted. They may have been, to all appearance, unimproved; but after years shew that the care bestowed has not been in vain. The good seed has at last sprung up.

The pastor who has toiled all night and taken nothing, will in another world, if not in this, see the fruit of labours which now appear to be utterly thrown away,—if his own part be done in a spirit of faithfulness and prayer, and dutiful performance of the will of God; if his teaching

be the truth of God, and his ministration according to His will.

A few considerations, however, will clearly shew that this dispensation, trying as it is, is a real mercy.

One of the chief dangers which beset those who are engaged in forwarding any great work is, that they are engrossed by it: the immediate work—pursued with interest and zeal—occupies their thoughts and becomes their end; it tends to fill their thoughts, and hides the sight of Him who is the true end of all. The love of our work grows upon us, and draws away our affections from the highest objects. We come to rely upon it, as if it were itself the one ground of hope,—instead of relying on God,—and thus are tempted to fix our hearts upon it. The failure of such a work, then, is a visitation parallel to that infinite mercy which removes the dearest objects of our earthly affections,—that those affections may not be withdrawn from their true object.

It is also a discipline of humility. Nothing is more trying to us than success,—especially of course success in those objects, our very devotion to which shews the high value which we set upon them. We are apt to identify ourselves with our works; *we* succeed

when they succeed. We seem to be the doers of the good that results from them. Here is a trial which has proved the ruin of many, especially of those whom the world holds to be *great* men. Perhaps it may be said that one most marked difference between the world's heroes and the Church's saints lies in this: the one exalt self, and identify their works with themselves; the other do their work as unto the Lord, and the seeming failure of their labours is a special means of producing a humbling sense of their own insufficiency and nothingness.

Lastly, it is a discipline of piety and prayer. It teaches us that we can effect nothing of ourselves, when our most matured plans, our long labours, our wisest counsels, fail. We are most healthfully reminded that the work is not to succeed by strength, or by wisdom, or by influence, or by brilliant talents; but by God's prospering it, and giving it good success; and we find in the end that prayer,—prayer for the success of our endeavours, offered in a spirit of humble resignation, and a willingness to see our dearest plans for good fail, if it be God's will,—is the surest means of bringing down a real blessing on our work, as well as on ourselves.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE CONDITIONS OF CONFIDENCE.

PSALM xxvii. 1. *The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom then shall I fear ? the Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom then shall I be afraid ?*

THE slopes on either side the valley of Elah were crowned with tents. On the one side rude weapons of war, and a strong entrenchment, marked an inferior, but resolute soldiery ; and on the other, the glitter of spear and sword, and the clang of armour, gave token of a well-appointed host. For forty days the armies had thus remained : day by day, from the weaker side, the voice of prayer, and the notes of praise, would bear witness that those encamped there were worshippers of Jehovah ; while unholy sacrifices to Dagon, and blasphemies of the Most High, shewed that the opposing bands, though the stronger in the arm of flesh, were in truth the weaker, for lack of the aid of God. And now,

advanced before their ranks, a giant form strode to and fro, the very picture of self-confidence and boasting, and contempt of the Almighty. Clothed in brazen armour from head to foot, brandishing a ponderous spear, girt with a matchless sword; trained from his youth to war, and glorying in his stature and strength; carrying dismay wheresoever he moved,—Goliath of Gath defied both man and God. With words of utter scorn, he stood and cried to the armies of Israel, “Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me: I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.” And who is this that at length accepts the challenge? what stripling is this that will not tamely hear the uncircumcised blaspheme his own Almighty Lord? Poor youth, the pitying spectators say,—why should you rush upon certain death? No armour has he to defend him,—no spear, no sword, no experience in war. One would think the simple shepherd boy imagined he was returning to his peaceful flock, not going forth to single combat with the giant Philistine. His shepherd’s staff is in his hand; his shepherd’s scrip is at his side; and in his right hand he bears a paltry sling. Yet

firmly he steps forward to meet his enemy, fearlessly he beholds him coming on. To mingled threats and curses boldly he replies,—“Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied: and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee. . . . And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.” Who does not know the result? The stripling slings a single pebble from the brook, it is buried deep in the blasphemer's forehead, and, loaded with all his brazen mail, the champion's carcass falls heavily and helplessly.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?” How exactly do these words express the spirit of the fearless youth. It was not mere natural courage that thus urged David to accept Goliath's challenge; it was not simply love for his country that thus moved him to take away the reproach from Israel; but he was bold because he knew that he fought on God's side, and for God's honour, and he was sure that God would therefore be his

salvation and his strength. In confident reliance, not on himself, but upon the help of God, ere he went forth, he said,—“The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”

In dwelling upon this narrative, because it has been brought before us in the course of the day's service, I have chosen the passage in the text, since it seems to shew that this confidence in God was no mere passing excitement, but the habitual temper of David's mind; and also because, from other parts of the Psalm it begins, I think we may discover some of the ways by which this confidence is to be nourished. The Psalm, as far as we can learn, was *not* written with any reference to this particular victory. It was probably composed afterwards, amidst some of the other dangers to which David was so long exposed, through the hatred of Saul. But the very same spirit that thus began to shew itself within him while yet ruddy and of a fair countenance, still smoothed his brow, and kept him from faint-heartedness, when more continual alarms annoyed him.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my

life ; of whom then shall I be afraid ? When the wicked, even mine enemies, and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell." One would fairly suppose he had the vision of Goliath rushing upon him, to give his flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth, and suddenly checked in his onset and prostrate on the ground,—as he penned these cheerful words ; and with this corresponds the sentence that follows ; " Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid : and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him." Brave spirit, stout of heart, why was he so fearless ? why so confident in God ? The verses that succeed seem not indistinctly to tell us.

1. " One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require : even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His tabernacle : yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone. And now shall He lift up mine head above mine enemies round about me." One secret source then of all his confidence was clearly the regular and constant prac-

tice of devotion. Fortified by prayer, coming fresh from converse with the Almighty, he felt that he had more than the strength of man. Whether it were that, all alone, as he sat watching the flocks committed to his defence, he employed himself in thus drawing courage from the Most High; or whether he presented himself before the tabernacle where God's glory had abode visibly upon the ark of the covenant, and won calmness of mind, and a collected spirit, as he joined in the appointed services there performed; whether it were from private prayer, or from public worship, one thing at any rate appears clear,—that it was by looking *away* from his own weakness, and to God's power, that he learnt to take the Lord for the strength of his life.

2. But a little further on we have another source of his confidence explained to us, viz. the purity of his conscience. He represents his heart as speaking face to face with the All-wise, as displaying all its secret thoughts and wishes before Him, and earnestly desiring God to look upon them. And what heart, conscious of guilt, dare do this? what hypocrite would venture thus to call on the Almighty to visit his inmost soul? “My heart,” he says, “hath talked of Thee, Seek ye My face: Thy face, Lord, will I seek. O

hide not Thou Thy face from me ; nor cast Thy servant away in displeasure. 'Thou hast been my succour ; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God, of my salvation.' It is said, perhaps with much truth, that it is conscience that makes cowards of us all. If we know ourselves to be traitors to our own best interests, when we come into real peril, what have we to rely upon, where is our stay ? So then it was David's custom not thus to suffer treachery to lurk in his own heart, but to make all clear and open before God, that in the day of danger he might feel the boldness of honesty and truth.

3. But besides these ways in which he fostered his holy reliance on an Almighty Defender, besides regular devotion and the maintenance of a good conscience, he strove to increase in himself a patient spirit of trustfulness. Some there are who for awhile endure, and in time of temptation fall away. They look indeed for a time for God's assistance, but when their enemy crieth so, and cometh on so fast, and there seems no prospect of deliverance, they lose heart and fall into despair. Such a behaviour would have assuredly cost David his life : if, at the last moment, when with steady aim he slung the pebble that seemed so little able to give to him the victory, he had

faltered and thought that God might have interposed to smite his enemy to the earth, all would have been lost, his foe would have been upon him, and one blow from his spear must have accomplished its murderous work. But listen how he schools himself to patience: "I should utterly have fainted; but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. O tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

Prayer, a clear conscience, and an untiring patience, these were the sources of his dauntless courage. Now it is not merely the example of a good and successful warrior that we have here before us. We know that David represents to us our Lord as the head and leader of the regenerate. The same entire reliance on the arm of the Father, was shewn us for our example by our Blessed Saviour, the Son of David, in His struggle with the powers of evil. Witness that combat in the garden of Gethsemane: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? Put up thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Goliath beheaded with his own

weapon, could not more strongly teach the folly of trusting to such defences, than this courageous rebuke of our Saviour. And He shews us that this calmness of spirit must be nourished within us by the very same means. Was it not our Saviour's custom, whensoever He was about to enter on any important part of His work, to spend a night in secret prayer to God? Did He not three times in that very night pray earnestly to His Father, and an angel appeared strengthening Him? And there are words of His which we may apply in their measure as shewing that a clear conscience best enables one to endure such a conflict with confidence. "The prince of this world cometh," were His own words, "and hath nothing in Me;" no sin by which to terrify Me, no hypocrisy by which to undermine My faith. And is it not of His patient tarrying for the Lord's leisure in delivering Him, that the prophet speaks in His name: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my calling. He brought me also out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay: and set my feet upon the rock, and ordered my goings."

The slopes of the valley of Elah are now

no longer crowned with tents. The traveller passes to the southwards of Jerusalem through a pleasant valley, its hills and rocks on either side marked here and there with ruins, but still the picture of peace, and down the midst there flows a little pebbly stream, the very brook whence David chose the five smooth stones that were to deliver Israel.

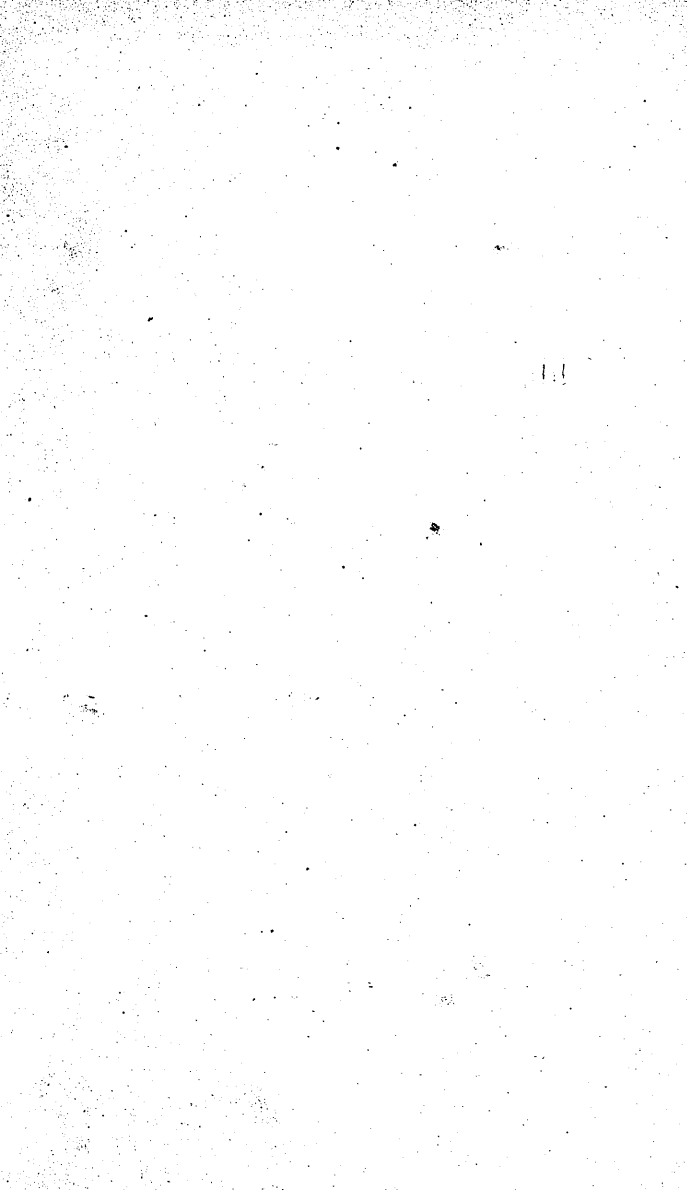
The garden of Gethsemane has now no armed band approaching to take prisoner the Son of Man, but pilgrims from distant lands worship there, and the only contest is who shall first and longest do the Saviour honour. But though these scenes are now so changed, the necessity of reliance upon God in every danger remains the same.

In our contest with the world as evil men, it is to God's protection and guidance we are alone to look; and as the collect to-day teaches us, it is to Him we must apply, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by His governance, that the Church may always serve Him in all godly quietness. Not to skill, or ability, or energy of our own, may we look to promote the Church cause, to succeed in the battles of the Lord of Hosts; but, clearing off from us all re-

liance upon human might, we must with simple confidence advance and do our duty. We need not fear the result. "In God we shall do great acts, and it is He that shall tread down our enemies."

And if this be so in our contest with powers outside us, much more is it the case in our battle with our foes within. In our struggle with those gigantic evil habits that seem to defy the power of man or God to remove, we must take care not to lose heart. We must make it a real duty not to turn the coward towards them. The sources of our confidence will be found still to be much the same as those which we have already considered in the case of David, and as taught by our Lord: regularity in prayer, and attendance on those appointed ways of gaining strength and soberness of mind,—the means of grace; the real approval of our own conscience, that we are in earnest in seeking God's face; and then a patient abiding for the Lord's good time of deliverance. Let us not be discouraged, though we seem so naked and defenceless; let us not be cast down, though, instead of prevailing, we seem for a long, long time perhaps to be rather beaten back; but let us indeed believe, in all our dryness of heart, that God

is with us. Let us cheer ourselves again and again with the picture of the triumphant shepherd-youth, and let us heartily join with Him and say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?"



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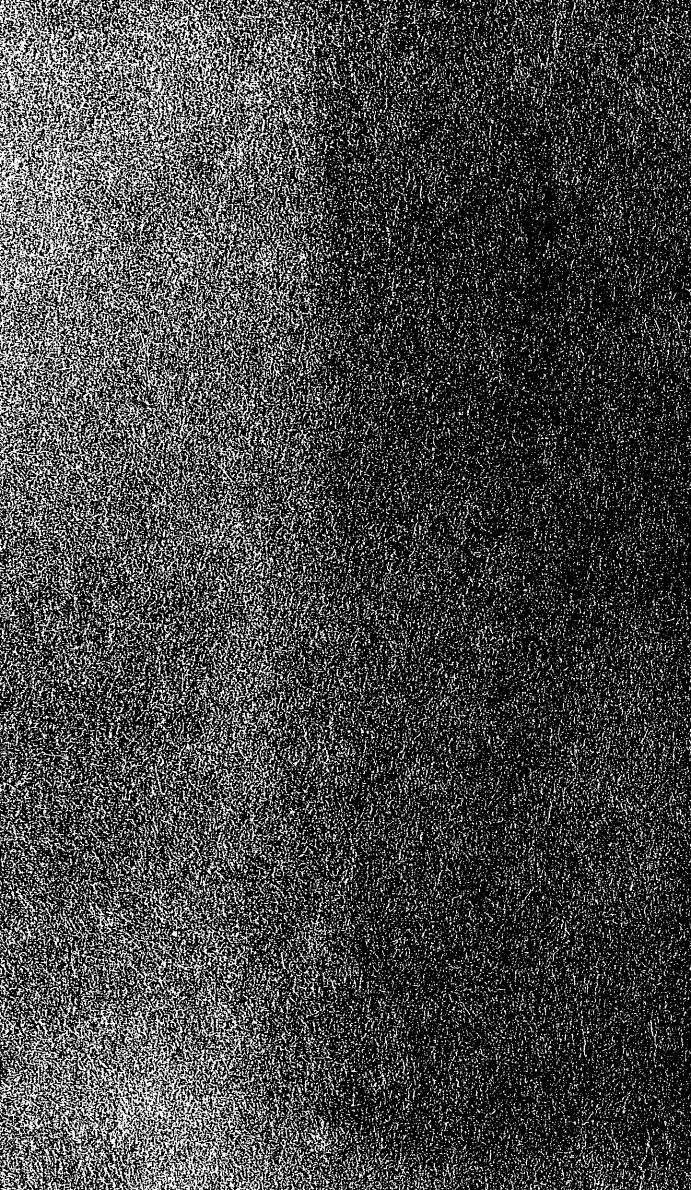
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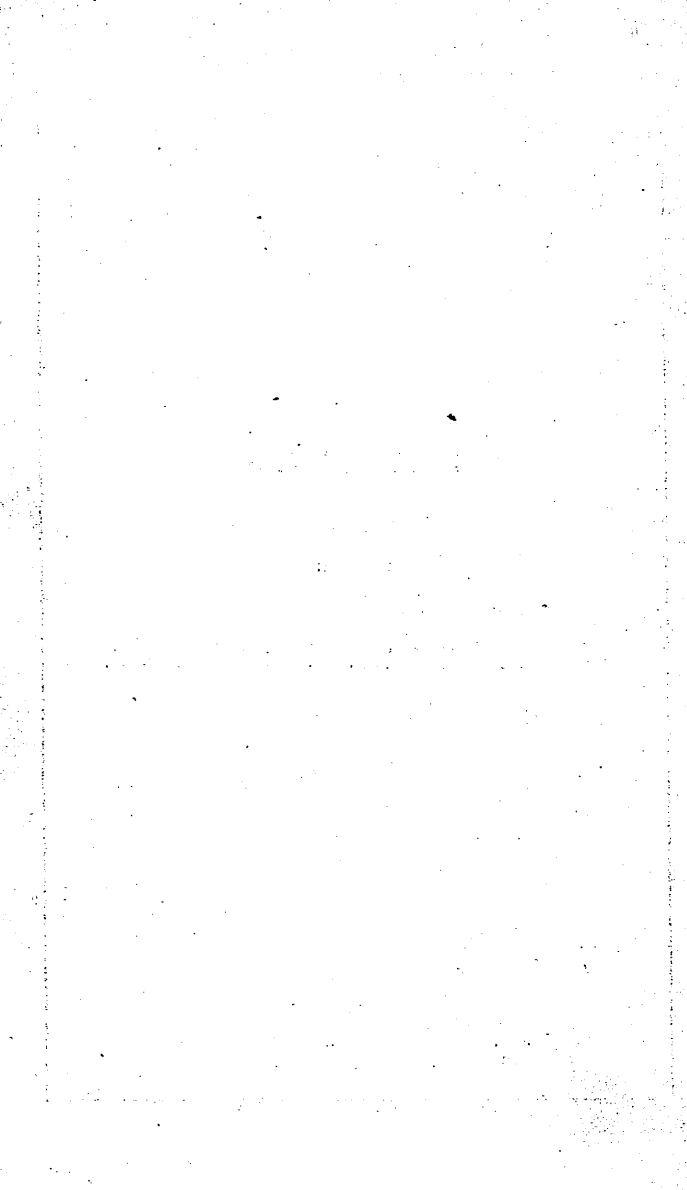
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Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE PENITENCE AND CHASTISEMENT OF DAVID.

2 SAM. xii. 13. *And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*

THE fall of David is one of the most awful warnings which holy Scripture contains. It is a warning to those who, from a long course of piety and of active service in the cause of God, may be regarded as friends of God, and men after God's own heart. And it shews us that the past services and the former piety even of such men, are no absolute security against their falling into the most dreadful sins, if they cease to be watchful, and give way to temptation.

From his youth up David had been leading a virtuous and a holy life; he had gained the esteem and love of those who knew him most intimately, and the honour of his countrymen. Brave, modest, loyal, forbearing to take the ho-

nours which he knew were destined for him, enduring to be driven out an exile from his home and country rather than lift up his hand against his king, wise in counsel, successful in war, he had delivered his country from a foreign yoke, and extended his empire over surrounding nations. And when you pass from these outward excellencies, which the world saw, approved, admired, to the inward principles from which they sprung, you find that from his youth up David loved and feared God : a regard to God was the ruling principle of his life, and prayer and praise were his delight. His natural genius, guided by the Spirit of God, breathed forth the sweetest and most exalted devotional poetry ; he loved the habitation of God, and delighted in beautifying it, and in promoting the worship of His sanctuary.

Yet this holy and confirmed servant of God yielded to temptation, like our first parents, and fell. He looked on what was evil, allowed the desire of it, and fell into deadly sin. The Spirit of God departed from him, and through that blind infatuation which such sin as his produces, he sunk deeper and deeper in iniquity ; and, as it would seem, without being conscious of his guilt.

What a lesson is this on the words of the

apostle, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" and what an evidence of the need there is of following that same apostle's example, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." What a warning not to allow the thought of any past services, or present love of God's house, or interest in religious subjects, in singing the praise of God, or delighting in sacred poetry, or the being employed in works connected with religion, or the having long stood firm even under great trials and difficulties, to make any one secure. St. Peter, the long-tried and seemingly most devoted of Christ's disciples, fell, and denied his Master. David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, became an adulterer and a murderer.

And the privileges and graces which he had received deeply increased his guilt. And yet, immediately on his saying "I have sinned against the Lord," the prophet replied, "The Lord hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die."

These words often strike persons as strange. It is a difficulty to them, that one who had fallen into sins so great, should be forgiven, as it seems, so easily: as if a few words of acknowledgment on the part of the sinner, immediately obtained

the putting away of the sin. And further, as if it was only because the enemies of the Lord had been led to blaspheme, that the punishment—the death of the child—was to be inflicted.

Now this is an important question, and one which will well repay attentive consideration.

And first, let us observe that the words—the few and simple words—which David uttered, are not to be viewed only by themselves; but as coming from the heart, and as evidencing what was in his heart. It is very easy for a person to say, I have sinned. It is easy to say this without any heart at all, carelessly, just with the lips. It is easy to say it under the influence of passing feelings of remorse. When one has committed a sin, and the thought of what he has done flashes across his mind, in a moment of remorse he may bitterly feel, and earnestly express, his sorrow; and yet it may be but a passing feeling, which will disappear when the immediate occasion is over, and give him no hold or stay against the like temptation when it comes again.

Wholly different is the state of mind of one who really feels in any good measure what those words express, “I have sinned against the Lord,” and who then turns away from sin and seeks the Lord with his whole heart. The cases

are quite different in themselves,—quite different in their results. The one leads to nothing, and is nothing; the other has in it a living principle, which issues in infinite results. Look at two seeds,—you see no difference between them,—your most exact observation cannot discern that one is living and the other dead. Yet there is that difference really in them; and when committed to the earth, the one decays and comes to nothing, the other shoots up and brings forth fruit. Such is the difference between real and apparent conversion. Now the eye of God sees this difference at once, and His prophet sees it; and immediately on the words expressing it being uttered, he hastens to give the assurance of forgiveness, “The Lord hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die.”

The words of David came from his heart; they expressed a deep and intense consciousness which only a man who had known God as a Father, Protector, and Friend,—who had known what loving obedience was,—could feel: “I have sinned against the Lord.”

They shewed that he felt the separation which there now was between him and his God,—his own alienation from Him,—his being unworthy of any regard from Him who had hitherto pro-

tected him,—his deserving to die. Not only to die that death in this world which his sin deserved, as an adulterer and a murderer; but that death of the soul which is the withdrawing of God's presence,—of that presence which is the soul's life; and the want of which is the dreary desolation that issues in everlasting misery. He had said when he heard of the sin of him who had taken away his neighbour's one favourite little lamb: "the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." What could he look for but the punishment he had himself assigned to him who had so wronged his poor neighbour, made as much greater as his own sin was greater,—who had first seduced the wife that was the beloved solace of Uriah's life, and then caused him himself to be killed, with all kinds of deceit and treachery? He could only expect to be cast away by God for ever. And had he been left in this state, who could say what might have been his fate?

From this depth of wretchedness and seeming hopelessness, then, the mercy of God hastened to deliver him. He saw the sincerity of his repentance, and on that pronounced forgiveness. Just so did our Blessed Saviour to the palsied man, before he asked for pardon: He said, "Thy sins

be forgiven thee;" to the woman that was a sinner, and stood silently washing His feet with her tears, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her;" to the woman accused by the Pharisees, "Go, and sin no more." Like the father beholding the returning prodigal afar off, He almost anticipates the words of confession by the assurance of forgiveness. He saw the heart. He knew the depth and the reality of David's penitence. He knew the need there was to snatch him from the abyss of despair, and He at once assured him by the prophet,—“The Lord hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die.” And then, as it were to shew him that punishment was to fall upon him, and that even though he himself was pardoned, there was reason why he should be openly chastised, he added, “Notwithstanding, because thou hast made the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child that is born of thee shall surely die.” The enemies of the Lord are irreligious men, opposed to goodness and piety, and it is plain there were many such even in Israel, and to these the fall of the religious was an occasion of speaking against religion itself. They blasphemed and spoke even against the Lord, when they saw the disgraceful and abominable sin of one who had been so

holy, and seemed so highly favoured by Him; and God's hatred of sin must be manifested, and His justice vindicated, by the punishment of the sinner. And, as we say, the death of the child was a manifest judgment upon him, which all could see and understand.

. But what I would have you especially observe is this: few and simple were the words of David's confession,—full and free was his forgiveness; but his whole after history unfolds to us, first, the depth of that contrition which was thus simply expressed, revealing itself in a broken and humble spirit, in the whole course of his life after; secondly, the afflictions with which it pleased God to chastise him, after He had so mercifully forgiven him.

. First, what his contrition was, is shewn by the Psalms he wrote. The fifty-first Psalm is said to have been written at this very time. That Psalm is the unfolding of that spirit of penitence, the expression of which was here compressed into these few words, "I have sinned against the Lord;" that Psalm which has ever been the model of penitence, and the expression of the deepest sorrow for sin among the most devout Christians;—nothing can go beyond it. This is the first unfolding of that living seed of sorrow of

which I spoke, and the other penitential Psalms are a further unfolding and expression of it. And David's own life still more. I would advise you to read carefully the rest of David's history, as it is recorded in the Books of Kings. After the destruction of the Ammonites, of whom we read at the end of the chapter, you will hear of no more wars, only of sorrows, and shame, and humiliation. Ever after this David appears as what we call a broken-hearted man. Afflictions come upon him, and he submits; he is insulted, and he humbles himself under it. The lessons of this afternoon and next Sunday shew us how he gives way before his own son rising against him; how he endures the insults of Shimei; how he shrinks from having his rebellious son put to death. His deep affliction at the death of Absalom cannot be appreciated, unless we consider that David knew that it was, so to say, all owing to himself,—all the effect of his own sin. He was reaping the fruits of his own mis-doing. He was himself the cause of this deep misery to himself, and to those that were most dear to him.

For, secondly, God did not allow David to go unpunished. He forgave him, but He punished him. He assured him that He had put away

his sin; on his repentance, He received him again unto Himself; but that did not exempt David from suffering. First the child, the offspring of his sin, was to die. This, we see, afflicted him most deeply. Then came on him all the punishment which he had himself pronounced on him who had seized the poor man's lamb, except his own death. He had said, "He shall restore fourfold;"—David had taken one man's life . . . he repaid it by the deaths of four of his own children: first, this son of Uriah; then, as we read in the next chapter, Ammon, killed by his own brother Absalom, because he had forced his sister,—wickedness and woe which must have bitterly reminded the afflicted king of his own sin in the matter of Uriah; then Absalom himself, who had lain with his father's concubines, and was afterwards put to death; then Ahithophel. Four of his own children were thus given up: the sword never departed from his house: the sins of his children, their undutifulness, then their death, these were chastisements which brought down the aged sovereign in sorrow to the grave.

My brethren, if any of you think that David was lightly treated when you heard the lesson of this day, consider what he suffered afterwards.

He was now forgiven on his real repentance; he was restored as a returning disobedient child to his Father's love, but he was still to suffer,—through his whole life,—sufferings made the more intense from the affectionate temper of David, and that yearning love for his children which we see in his conduct on the rebellion of Absalom. And let us learn from all this how grievous a thing it is to sin against God. Let us remember how we have ourselves sinned, and what we deserve to suffer. And when earthly afflictions come upon us,—if it be our lot to suffer from ill-health, from reverses of fortune, poverty, neglect,—if those whom we have benefited prove ungrateful to us,—if our children turn out ill, or are taken from us, let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, considering that we deserve it all. Let us say with the penitent thief, “We indeed suffer justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds;” and bear these troubles humbly, uncomplainingly, resignedly, as knowing that they are deserved chastisements.

Let us study the penitence of David. As we say the penitential Psalms, let us pray that our spirits may grow more and more into conformity with them. Let us consider that his repentance

was not a thing once done and over, exhausted in one single expression of contrition; it was the work of his life. He never ceased to be a penitent. His humility and contrition deepened as he grew older: he did not live without sin; for he fell again under temptation of another kind,—a proud rejoicing (such as the world admires, but God abhors,) in the prosperity and increase of his people. Of that we shall speak another time. But yet on the whole a humble sense of his past sin continued with him. So let it be with us. Let us not forget that we have sinned, though in times long gone by. If afflictions come upon us, let us regard them as merciful chastisements, in which God writes bitter things against us, and makes us possess the iniquities of our youth; remembering those words of Bishop Taylor: “A true penitent must all the days of his life pray for pardon, and never think the work completed, till he dies.”

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THANKFULNESS THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE.

2 SAM. XXIV. 25. *And David built there an altar unto the Lord.*

THE single chapter from which these words are taken, and which is read as the second lesson in this evening's service, seems to give us hints respecting several of the chief steps in the life of most of us. There are some souls, indeed,—a few, the happiest of their kind,—that have never greatly swerved from the ways of God, or fallen from the grace of baptism: from infancy they have been well shielded from temptation; the dangers of youth and more mature age have been escaped by their careful attendance on the duties of religion; and with loving hearts they have kept themselves always close to their Saviour. For such we believe there is a crown of surpassing brightness reserved in heaven;

for such there is a place in the immediate presence of the Lamb, and it will be their privilege to follow next to Him, whithersoever He goeth. I delight, I say, to repeat this truth, because it is in itself a pleasant and cheering thought, that Christ should find some hearts amongst us His from the beginning,—His in humble dependence now, His in perfect likeness hereafter; and also because we may entertain hope that some of the younger ones amongst us will be encouraged to hate the first approaches of sin, to cling to Christ's favour more entirely, by being often reminded of the exceeding blessedness of those who so love Christ, by considering that there is a treasure in the heavens set apart for all who do so,—a fulness of blessings to them who never transgressed at any time their Father's commandment, not known to those who have been lost and found.

Yet it is rather to these last that this chapter speaks; and the lesson it teaches is not without much consolation. It sets forth the sin, the recovery, the chastisement, and the thanksgiving of one who, early chosen, early disciplined by a long course of sorrow, yet fell more than once heavily, and still in the end arose and overcame,—of David, the favourite of God.

1. First let us see what was his sin. That it was some very great offence, the words of sacred Scripture do not leave us room to doubt. Even Joab, who appears to have been a thoroughly bad man, being both a traitor and a murderer, saw its wickedness, and tried to prevent the king from committing it. Yet it was only the numbering of the people;—at first sight no very grievous fault, and an action in itself, and on some occasions, right and necessary. But in David's case at this time it seems to have involved two distinct offences: a violation of God's express command, and an indulgence in a proud, self-confident spirit. For in the 30th chapter of Exodus we find this particular direction: "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel . . . an half-shekel shall be the offering of the Lord." The object of this law seems to have been to make the people remember that they owed even their life, much more their strength and increase in numbers, to

Him who had placed His presence amongst them. David seems altogether to have neglected this law ; and to have done so in that very spirit of pride which it was its intention to repress. He wished to please himself with the review of what a mighty power he had at his disposal ; he desired his own subjects and foreigners also to be aware what a great and formidable sovereign he had become. He must needs number his soldiers,—as if they were the source of his success ; and he who as a youth could say, “The Lord saveth not with sword and spear,” and could attack Goliath with a sling, must now, when he was grey-headed, turn and rest upon the arm of flesh, and boast himself that he had in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword.

Now is this a very uncommon sin ? Is it supposed to be at all a sin ? I ask you to apply your thoughts to our own case. Do we, as a nation, think it wrong to recount with pride our great wealth and immense resources, our wide empire, on which the sun never sets, our increasing population, our magnificent navy, our fine soldiery, our progress in all the arts which refine our life, or facilitate mutual communication ? When our people are numbered, are we more

affected with a spirit of pride and glorying, or humbled with shame and contrition at the neglect of religion that prevails amongst us? Or again, when we think of war and victory, do we trust in God, or rather, perhaps altogether, in our power, and wealth, and strength, and courage? David sinned thus, and thus have we, as a nation, sinned.

But to refer to the conduct of each of us one by one. Have not we, the most of us, been like him in sinning, each in his own way? Have we not more than once or twice done contrary to an express law of God? How often, alas! have many of us openly persisted in neglecting God's commandments! How often have we been angry when any have in kindness warned us of our danger, as David was angry with Joab! And does not our conscience tell us that, in pride and self-confidence, we have done equally wrong with David? Can we not remember times when, in persisting in our own will, and in the correctness of our own judgment, we have been the cause of suffering and sin, perhaps not only in ourselves.

2. But though sinning thus grievously, and remaining blind to his faults for no less a time than nine months and twenty days,—the period

during which Joab was absent by his orders,—David's heart at last smote him. The prophet was sent to reprove him, and these are the words of his humble confession: "I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." What a sight of sorrow, and yet of comfort, is this picture of the king returning to his better mind! How bitterly must he have been reminded of his former humiliation, when, after his adultery with Bathsheba, he had prayed, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and renew a right spirit within me!" Almost he must have doubted whether God would again accept him,—again a suppliant before the Almighty, again fallen from His love, again blinded with sin; if he had not known that the Almighty is of tender mercy and very pitiful, he must have been tempted to fear that there was now no more hope, no more place of repentance, left him. But this he did know, and therefore, without hesitation, he applied for forgiveness: "Now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant." Such was his sin, and such his recovery. If we have been like him in the one, can we say that we are like him in the other? Can we

really answer to our hearts, that we do see that we have done foolishly? It may not be the first time we have wandered from Christ,—it may not be even the second, or third, or seventieth fault that we have wilfully committed,—yet we need not lose heart. We know, not only, that even as a father pitieth his children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him; but we know also why He is so. We know that for these sins of ours God's only Son has died; and therefore, if we be indeed determined to amend, if we be at length of a broken and contrite heart, we may come to Him hopefully to seek for forgiveness.

3. Yet, in the case of David, the Almighty did not grant pardon without chastisement. It was indeed a remarkable mercy that He offered His favoured servant a choice of punishments: "Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land?" Such was the offer God made him by His prophet. The choice that David made is very touching, and the reason he gives for it. No doubt he remembered at last the law which he had broken, and recollected that the punishment which God

had Himself then fixed for its transgression was, that the plague or pestilence should come upon the land. And this would have been reason enough for David's love and returning desire of obedience, to ask for its infliction. But he gives another cause for his choice: "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great,) and let me not fall into the hand of man." David well knew that the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. He had by experience found that men will not spare when they get their enemies into their power. But of God he only knew that He was a loving parent,—one who does not causelessly afflict the sons of men,—one who spareth when we deserve chastisement, and in His anger thinketh upon mercy. Safe he must be in His hands; though God should slay him, yet might he trust in Him; therefore, trustingly, hopefully, with entire resignation to a will better and wiser than his own, David cast himself into the arms of God.

Shall we not do the same? Shall we not thankfully behold the rod that would chasten us in this world, that we may be saved in the next? In whatever way our sin may have found us out,—in whatever form the suffering we so fully deserve may have fallen upon us,—oh! let us not

struggle against Him who, we may be sure, has some reason wherefore He contendeth with us. If we be in truth sensible of our fault,—if we have a genuine sorrow for having broken loose from the bands of love,—how glad, how thoroughly thankful, shall we be, that God dealeth with us as with sons! He may take from us all that wherein we trusted,—He may remove the delight of our eyes at a stroke,—He may even threaten us that we ourselves shall be lost. All we can say is, Not my will be done, O Lord, but Thine; remove from me all that keeps me from Thyself; if for Thy sake I must be lost, I will.

In speaking of David's sin in proudly numbering the people,—in pride and self-confidence,—I referred to the like feeling as too common amongst ourselves. And may not the mention of these three great punishments which God set before David, and gave him the choice of one of them, remind us that we have had like warning from God, and have been as it were touched—slightly, tenderly, mercifully touched—by the scourge. The three punishments are—pestilence, famine, war. When we were proudly glorying in the greatness, and wealth, and prosperity of our country, again and again we have been visited—in some slight degree, indeed, but yet sufficiently

to shew us how easily we might have been visited more severely—with the pestilence.

When we were in the full tide of prosperity, and enjoying the abundance of all things,—large wages, cheap provisions,—and thought that all would continue,—a sudden check came, and hard times, dearness and want of work, succeeded ; we had a sufficient measure of famine to shew us what it *might* have been,—that on us might fall that dreadful visitation which in other countries caused the death of so many.

And after all this, war has come. The hand of God is over us ; we do not see the end, we do not know whether He may bring sudden losses upon us, or inflict the chastisement of a long-continued struggle, occasioning loss of life to many, the affliction of friends, making many widows and fatherless, and many childless, and probably also bringing much varied distress and suffering.

Let us see why the hand of God is stretched out against us, and by a timely repentance seek to turn away His indignation from us.

4. But yet once more David is not satisfied with thus humbling himself by repentance, and with meekly putting himself into his Father's hands,—he must needs shew forth the praise of

Him who had dealt so lovingly with him. There, where the angel stood with the sword drawn to smite down his people,—there, on Mount Moriah, where afterwards the Lamb of God should be sacrificed,—David built an altar, and, as a token of a grateful heart, offered sacrifices, not of that which cost him nothing, but to the value of six hundred shekels of gold.

I have chosen this particular verse as the text, because I would set before you the end of all this history, as that for which you should strive. If any have been sinful,—if any have been by God's mercy rescued from the burning and brought to repentance,—if any have received the chastisement that is so healthful,—then are they doubly bound to praise their Saviour. He has full claim, no doubt, to the praise of all His creatures; but if there be one who, above all, is tied by every holy and better affection to set forth His glory, it is that creature who, having once been lost, has again been brought into His enlivening presence. Gratitude, opening the heart to give freely to God of all we have, is the natural fruit of real repentance and the hope of forgiveness. David was not content with *words* of thanksgiving, or with outward and costless sacrifices. He would not give to God of that which cost him nothing.

Nor will any Christian who considers what his own sins have been, and how infinite is that mercy by which he has been pardoned. Give Him then the only sacrifice that remains,—give Him yourselves, and all you are masters of,—give it lovingly, thankfully: and I shall only add to you the words of Araunah to David,—The Lord accept thee.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET.

1 KINGS xiii. 30. *And they mourned over him, saying,
Alas, my brother.*

THE lesson for this morning suggests many awful and solemn thoughts, for it is a history of divine punishments. The idolatrous altar rent, and the ashes poured out; the hand of the profane king dried up and withered; the future pollution of the altar by the burning of men's bones upon it, and the destruction of the houses of the high places, foretold; the man of God, who had uttered the prophecy, slain for his disobedience to the word of the Lord spoken by his own mouth, and the old prophet who had deceived him forced to condemn himself in uttering a prophecy of the punishment which he had himself brought upon his brother; all this, if only we will allow the lesson to sink deeply into our hearts, will force upon us the sense of how "evil

a thing and bitter" it is to forsake the Lord our God, and to put away His fear. It is true that we have not "received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption," (as we are reminded in the epistle,) "whereby we cry Abba, Father;" yet that Spirit speaks in us with loving, childlike confidence, only while we are obedient children; for in the same epistle we read that, "if we live after the flesh we shall die."

Three sins, and their punishments, are set before us in this chapter: 1, the sin of Jeroboam, in which his people shared, in setting up the golden calves in Bethel and in Dan; 2, the sin of the old prophet, who dwelt in Bethel, in deceiving his brother, and tempting him to disobedience, by speaking lies in the name of the Lord; 3, and the sin of the man of God who came from Judah, in being deceived and persuaded to act against the express command of God.

1. Very terrible was the severity of the punishment which came upon Jeroboam; but it was in proportion to the greatness of his sin. He had been God's chosen instrument for delivering a portion of God's people from the yrranny of Rehoboam the son of Solomon. Ten

tribes had been given into his hand by the prophet of God, and a most gracious promise had been added, — that if he would walk in God's ways, his throne should be established, and God's presence be with him. But no sooner was Jeroboam established in his kingdom, than, fearing lest his people's heart should be drawn again to the kings of Judah, if they went up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, he made two calves of gold, and set them up in the two extreme cities of his dominions, and said unto the people, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt;" moreover, he made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. Such was his sin; and it was of a nature so malignant, that it clung to his name ever afterwards, so that he is scarcely ever mentioned again in the Bible, excepting as "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, *who made Israel to sin.*" And his punishment,—was not that also most terrible? While he was in the very act of consecrating this new altar at Bethel to the new service of his golden god, the prophet came from Judah, and before all his people denounced his self-devised worship, and branded his altars and sacrifices with the curse of God. His hand also,

which he put forth against the man of God, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him; the altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar. But had his sin ended here, his punishment had not been so awful. Had his request to the man of God, "Intreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me," been the expression of true penitence, then who can doubt that God would in wrath have remembered mercy, and Jeroboam, like Manasseh, had obtained forgiveness himself, even if his people had refused to return from their idolatry. But with Jeroboam it was far otherwise. Punishment only hardened his heart, and the wonders and signs seared his conscience, so that he filled up the measure of his iniquity, and wrath came upon him to the uttermost. No sin, perhaps, is greater, and no punishment more severe, than his who, to secure the good things which God has given, sets at nought the commandments of the giver.

2. We proceed to speak of the sin and the punishment of the old prophet who dwelt at Bethel. He seems to have been one of those miserable men whom familiarity with holy things had hardened rather than exalted. He could see sin in others,—to his own he seems to have been

blinded. He could, and he did, speak the truth of God, under the inspiration which was God's precious gift to him ; but to gain his own selfish ends he lied unto his brother ; he lied in the worst possible manner, using his prophetic character to accomplish his own unlawful desires : " He said, I am a prophet also as thou art ; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water." He perverted God's holy gift to avoid a slight disappointment, leading a better man than himself into disobedience, ending in a violent death, lest he should return home alone from a fruitless errand. It is an awful warning for all of us, my brethren, who are engaged in any holy work for God's special honour. If, as the ministers of Christ, we watch for others' souls, warning the wicked from the error of his way ; or if, as brethren, we read or speak of the things of God to others, with whom we may have influence for good ; to children, or our poorer neighbours, we are not therefore exempted from the temptations which are common to man. On the contrary, the greater trust we have received from our King, the more earnestly will His enemy endeavour to corrupt us ; the more intimately we are

engaged in holy services, the more will our consciences be dulled and stupified, unless we keep them with all diligence, as in the sight of God, and use the sacred services to which we are called as means to raise us above ourselves, and knit us to our Saviour in loving obedience. Alas ! who among us does not feel this danger. We can see its workings plainly enough in others ; well it will be for us if we can perceive, and recoil with dread and horror from, its first commencement in ourselves. There is a refuge for us. Yes, He that redeemed us knows our weakness, and will uphold us, and carry us safely through the work He has appointed us, if, confessing our past failures and present evil tendencies, we will strive carefully to overcome these known faults, and “keep under our body, and bring it into subjection,” lest, after having preached to others, taught them, comforted them, and helped them, we ourselves should be cast away.

That prophetic gift, which the old prophet had abused for the furtherance of his evil purposes, was the instrument of his punishment : “It came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back : and he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the

Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers." How much these words must have stung him who uttered them, can be well understood by those who have been obliged by their office to condemn in others the sin of which they have themselves been guilty.

3. The two warnings we have already considered are directed, one against apostacy, the other against the gross profaning of holy things. It remains to speak of the sin and punishment of him who, though in weakness he forgot his duty, yet was upon the whole true-hearted,—the man of God who came from Judah. This title of "the man of God," which is given in the Old Testament to Moses, to Samuel, to Shemaiah, to Elijah, to Elisha, to Hanan the son of Igdaliah, and to several whose names are not recorded, seems usually to indicate one who had a special commission, to deliver some one great message, or execute some high office for God; whereas a prophet was rather an ordinary teacher of the will of God, empowered from time to time to foretel by the word of the Lord some future event.

This man of God came from Judah by the word of the Lord, to denounce the idolatrous worship which King Jeroboam was about to set up. He found the king already standing by the altar to burn incense. It was an appointed festival,—the fifteenth day of the eighth month; and no doubt multitudes were assembled together—the false priests and the deluded people—to witness the ceremony; but boldly, before them all, at the risk of his life, the man of God spoke out his message, “And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord.” The truth of God was in him, and he burned with a righteous indignation against the false, idolatrous, and self-willed worship which the king was setting up. He foretold that the priests that burnt incense there should themselves be offered, and men’s bones burnt thereupon. And the more plainly to set the mark of God’s wrath upon that religion of man’s device, he gave an immediate sign: “Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.” And when the king impiously put forth his hand against the messenger of God, his hand became withered.

When the man of God had delivered his message, he was prepared to depart; but the king

said unto him, "Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward." But the man of God was not to be so tempted. The court of a king who had renounced the living and true God, and on whose new religion God's curse was pronounced, was no resting-place for him; so he answered, no doubt in a very different spirit, and with far more truth of meaning, than Balaam to Balak: "If thou wilt give me half thine house I will not go with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so it was charged me by the word of the Lord." In that city, which was polluted by the idolatrous worship of those who had forsaken the true God, it was not permitted to the man of God so much as to eat bread nor drink water, lest he should be partaker of its pollution. Nor did he dally with temptation, but departed another way, in obedience to God. So far he had done well. The command of God had been obeyed perfectly, and His commission executed, both that which related to the king and his idolatry, and that which bore hard, as it seemed, on his own frail flesh. But another temptation awaited him: wearied, we may well suppose, with his journey and his long fast, and exhausted when the excitement of his great work was over, he was

found sitting under an oak by a brother prophet, who repeated the invitation which he had refused to the king: "Come home with me and eat bread." This invitation was no doubt a greater temptation than the king's had been, but the man of God returned a like answer; and only gave way when the old prophet devised a false story of an angel's message to bring him back. It is an awful spectacle,—one prophet devising a lie, and another believing it. Their freedom of will was left to them, although they were inspired men. One abused his freedom to do evil, the other to relax his watchfulness against it. The man of God was no more forced to believe the lie, than the old prophet was to utter it. Though one in angel's form had spoken to him, he should not have been led to do that which God had forbidden. He should have felt as St. Paul did, when he wrote, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." But the flesh was weak, and he yielded to the false persuasion without rousing in himself the strength of the willing spirit, which would have told him that God cannot deny Himself.

The punishment which came upon him, de-

nounced even while he sat at meat, vindicated God's honour, and left an awful lesson to all who read his history,—and to us especially, my brethren, who have been now dwelling upon it,—of reverent and watchful obedience to that which in our secret hearts we know to be the will of God. A lion found the disobedient prophet and slew him by the way, but left his carcase untouched. This appears, at first sight, a very severe punishment for one who seems to have sinned in ignorance: but we may reply, in the first place, that the very severity of the punishment may shew us that the sin of a prophet is greater than that of an ordinary man. If God gives more grace, He looks for more abundant and more perfect fruit. He that has received five talents must not be satisfied to lay down four at his Master's feet, though four were accepted with commendation from him that had received only two. If a special insight into the things of God had been granted to the man of God, there was the less excuse for him when he allowed himself to be deceived by a prophet of falsehood; but in the next place, we may, with a cheerful hope, believe that the man of God was taken away, even by that sudden and bloody death which was his punishment, from the evil to come. As

we are led by the whole history to believe that his heart was right in the sight of God, we may trust that his punishment was only temporal, and that truly repenting, when, by a special message from God, his sin was shewn him, he was enabled to say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

That his memory was venerated long afterwards by holy men, is plain from the conduct of Josiah. When, more than six hundred and fifty years afterwards, he came to fulfil the prophecy which the man of God had uttered, and took the bones from the sepulchres to burn them upon the idol's altar, he gave strict charge concerning the sepulchre of the man of God,—
"Let him alone; let no man move his bones."

The pious king revered the bones of the man of God, who had spoken boldly His holy word, and resisted the allurements of a kingly court. Let us also reverence his memory; and pray God that his courage and his faithfulness may be found in us, while we watch against the wiles of the wicked one, by which he was drawn aside, not into wilful transgression, but into a too careless yielding to falsehood.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

NINTH SUNDAY, AFTER TRINITY.

THE WISDOM OF THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD.

ST. LUKE. xvi. 8. *The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

THERE are in the parable of which the text forms part, many points of considerable difficulty, and yet the lessons conveyed by it, when rightly understood, are so beneficial, and so suitable to our condition, and so much forgotten in the present day, that I will endeavour, with God's blessing, to explain it to you this morning,—following the guidance of the Church, which has appointed it as the gospel for the day.

Many of our Lord's discourses are difficult to understand : at this we must not be surprised. He conveys instruction hidden under parables. He manifests His attributes by mysterious, symbolical actions ; as it is said in the Psalms, " I will open my mouth in a parable : I will declare hard sentences of old." He does this for a wise

purpose, in order that while His meaning is hidden from the careless and indifferent, it may be revealed to those who take pains to understand it. So it will be with us now. If we are humble, teachable, and patient to find out what seems difficult at first, and above all if we are obedient, our Lord's words will teach us true wisdom. His most sacred teaching is intended only for the obedient: in very mercy He hides the deepest and holiest truths from the careless and profane: for they could not understand them were they ever so plainly declared, and if they received them only to misunderstand them, they would gain harm from them, instead of good; like a diseased body, in which the wholesomest food becomes poison; as wine and meat are destruction to one who is in a burning fever, while to the weak and weary they are strength and refreshment.

The conduct of the unjust steward is accountable enough. He was accused unto his lord that he had wasted his goods: and feeling that he could not defend himself, he feared that he should be cast out from his stewardship; so he turned his thoughts towards making a provision for himself after his stewardship was lost, without working, which he could not do, or beg-

ging, of which he was ashamed; and as he was a man who was restrained by no good principles, he thought he would make what use he could of his power while he had it, to secure himself friends for the day of his necessity. So he called every one of his lord's debtors, and forgave them part of their debt, receiving from them a promissory note for a smaller sum than the real debt. "And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely," i. e. his own master commended him: but he commended him not for his injustice, but for his prudence: being unjust, he is commended for acting cleverly and wisely as an unjust man. And so he is proposed to us as an example by our Lord, not that we should imitate his injustice, but his wise forethought: just as in another place the serpent is proposed as an example for us, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves;" not hurtful as serpents, but prudent and cautious as serpents, whilst gentle and loving and harmless as doves. The wisdom of the poisonous grovelling loathsome serpent, is proposed for our imitation, because it is wisdom; and so is the wisdom of this steward, not his injustice. It is not the principles of the unjust steward which are recommended for our imitation. His principles were bad, but he acted as wisely

as he could act on his own principles. And we are exhorted to act out our principles as well and as wisely as he acted out his. "The lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness," i. e. use your worldly wealth so as to make friends of the poor and needy, "that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations," i. e. that when ye die they may receive you into the home of the blessed. The steward made use of the money which his master had entrusted to him, to make himself friends of his lord's debtors. Christians also are to make use of the possessions which God gives them, to make for themselves friends of the poor and needy, and to bring upon themselves their prayers and blessings. The precept is exactly the same as our Lord gave to the young man: "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And St. Paul the same: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good

foundation against the time to come." Our Saviour also bids us, in the sermon on the Mount, lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, not upon earth; and you may observe, that in both these passages, where giving to the poor is mentioned, the heavenly reward is connected with it. Our Saviour says, "Give and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." St. Paul says, "Distribute, communicate, and lay up a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold upon eternal life." So in the parable our Saviour says, "Make to yourselves friends by the riches of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

But we may observe a much nearer and more exact likeness between the provident steward and ourselves, than I have yet drawn out. We also are stewards, to whom God has committed earthly possessions, with various talents and opportunities, powers of mind and body, and influence over others. And these He bids us use for Him, permitting us to benefit ourselves by them, and commanding us to use them for the benefit of others, yet always for His glory. These possessions are not our own. Riches are not our own, health and strength are not our own; opportuni-

ties of doing good to others, power to help them, power to console and support them,—these are not our own: they are lent us, that we may make a good use of them; lent us by God, that we may use them for His glory. Therefore our Saviour says, “If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?” Our character or disposition is our own, though it is God’s gift; a far greater gift it is; a far greater gift is true holiness, all good and heavenly affections,—than the gift of earthly riches and opportunities: therefore He says, “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have been unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”

Now those higher gifts Almighty God permits us to call our own, because they are grafted into us by the Holy Ghost, and become part, as it were, of our own character. We drink them in with the waters of life, and are imbued and penetrated with them, as when light pervades the whole mass of a transparent object, or fire goes through and changes the whole piece of iron which is heated in the furnace: and thus the graces of the Holy Spirit become our own.

But earthly possessions are no part of ourselves: they are not our own; we cannot take them to ourselves; they are but lent us: they are nothing to us till we make use of them. Thus we are as stewards, to fulfil a trust.

In the next place, we are as stewards accused to our master that we have wasted his goods. We have offended our Master in heaven. We have not used His gifts as we ought. We have squandered what He has committed to us in self-indulgence. We have neglected our opportunities, and misused our influence; while Satan, "the accuser of the brethren," is ready to make the most of these charges against us. And we are like this steward in a third point,—that we too are awaiting our account, as he was. In the day of judgment Christ will say to us, "Give an account of thy stewardship;" and well may we fear lest the account should be found against us, and we should be condemned by our Lord.

How then are we to provide against that judgment-day? and where are we to find refuge when our Lord takes away the stewardship, as He will do at the judgment-day; for there our trial is ended? Here is a fourth point of likeness between us and the steward,—he made friends of his master's debtors by doing them

kindness : we also are to turn for help towards our fellow-sinners, who are all debtors to Christ, and shew kindness and exercise charity towards them : to make them our friends ; to engage their prayers for us, and obtain their blessing ; and, as the parable encourages us to hope, to receive assistance from them in our preparation for the day of judgment, and be welcomed by them to a heavenly home. Do you not see then how great a blessing it is for us to be allowed to do good to the poor, the sick, and the afflicted ? Is it not a great mercy that Christ has appointed such a means of deliverance from some of the evils which we have brought upon ourselves by our sins ? Not as if we could earn heaven, or deserve God's favour, by charity towards the poor, and kindness towards the miserable. No ; we surely cannot be so foolish as to suppose we can *deserve* anything for spending that which is Another's in the way He bids us. But this is His own appointed means to us for providing against the judgment-day. He makes the poor His treasurers, to whom giving what we deny ourselves, we are laying up treasure in heaven : "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord ; and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again." And the parable tells us that

this repayment shall take place at the day of judgment. Of course we cannot say how this shall be ; but that it may be in any way, according to God's appointment, we cannot doubt. Oh ! happy it would be for rich men, if they would only believe God's Word that so it is, and, instead of spending only on themselves, adding field to field, and house to house, or living in selfish luxury, or given up to the adornment of their dwellings, or the improvement of their estates, they would lend to the Lord, by giving to the poor, to receive again a far richer recompense, in the great day of account. I said, we know not how that repayment shall be made hereafter. But surely it is a remarkable token of the miserable unbelief of our age and country that no value is attached to the prayers which are offered up now, by the needy and distressed, for those who relieve them. There have been times, and it is so now in some countries, when the beggar's blessing was considered a rich recompense for the alms bestowed upon him, and the promise of prayers in behalf of the giver was really an inducement for him to give ; but the prayers of the needy are despised in this money-loving age and country ; the blessings which they procure are too far off, and too spiritual, to be valued by

those who are buying and selling, and getting gain,—who either are rich, or wishing earnestly to be rich, and so have fallen into a snare, and become blind and indifferent to their true good. O miserable condition, for men who are awaiting the coming of their Lord to reckon with them! Sickness is coming on, and a gloomy old age, failing strength, pain of body, the cold grave, and the sleep of death, where there is no money, no luxury, no gaiety, no pleasures of the body,—and what will riches do for us then? and what shall we answer the Judge, if we are accused, and justly accused, of hoarding up His goods, or spending them upon ourselves? My brethren, you may thank God that most of you are not exposed to the temptation of being rich, or having the prospect of riches before you. Still, take care that you do not long, for that which you are not likely to have. Do not envy those who are richer than yourselves. Take care you do not covet, and so bring God's anger upon you for breaking His commandment. And while you are, perhaps, tempted to wish for more than you have got, make good use of what you have. You have all opportunities of doing essential kindness to your neighbours in sickness and distress, and you all need to make friends for the day of trial.

Let all things be done with reference to that day, for on that day all your actions bear. All things will find their true value in that day. And why should we be less wise for that day, than the children of this world are for the present day? Yet so it is,—“The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light.” They provide for this world better than we for heaven. They are more watchful, more prudent, and more persevering in laying up their treasures, than we in laying up ours. How diligently they labour day by day, and night by night, not to provide for their families, (for it is not of this labour that I speak,) but that they may become rich, perhaps even grudging what is absolutely required for the maintenance of their dependents. How steadily they pursue their one object! How everything bends to their one purpose! Perhaps they are naturally kind and obliging, but when gain is in question, they become hard and cruel; or they would rather naturally be honest, but when the temptation is great enough, they act unfairly at least; they take undue advantage, if they are not absolutely what is called dishonest; or, if they are strictly fair in their dealings, it is often rather because they think it more for their advantage, than for prin-

ciple's sake. Honesty, it is said, is the best policy; and so they are honest for their own sake, and not for the sake of their neighbour, and because it is right. And then how shrewd they are, and how calculating, and how well they lay their plans, and take advantage of the weakness of others! Thus they shew their wisdom, in their own way, seeking their own chosen ends, and often attaining them.

And what is the greatest punishment that can come on such men,—men whose hearts are thus set on mammon? It is, that they may prosper; that success may attend all their designs, that all their plans may be accomplished; that they may become rich and powerful, and rise above their fellows, and get a place and name in the world. This is the greatest misery that can befall the men who have made gain their god. They attain their end, and a miserable end it is. "They have their reward;" they are wise for their own generation, and in their own generation the fruit of their wisdom withers and dies, and leaves them as desolate and decayed branches ready to be burned. There is no surer token of God's displeasure, than when all things go smoothly and prosperously with men whose hearts are set upon earthly ends. The children

of Israel lusted after flesh, and obtained their desire; "but while the meat was yet in their mouths, the heavy wrath of God came upon them:" the plague was begun. "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," said Abraham to the rich man, "and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

My brethren, if any of you have had warm hopes, and laid thoughtful plans, for some good thing of this world, and your hopes have been disappointed, and your plans frustrated time after time, you may thank God for delivering you from probable destruction. I suppose many a man has cause to give thanks that his schemes have not been allowed to succeed. It is a token, you may trust, of mercy in store for you that He does not permit you to cast in your lot with the men of this world. If neighbours and acquaintances have become rich beside you, and grown at the same time covetous and proud, while you have remained poor, thank God, and take courage, for the renewal of your earnest endeavours after that poverty of spirit which shall possess the kingdom of heaven. It is far easier for the poor, the disappointed, and the afflicted, to enter into the kingdom, than for those who have their own way

at all times, and are satisfied continually, and succeed in all their undertakings ; especially if they have succeeded by doing wrong. So long as men are contentedly enjoying the fruits of evil deeds, or even of over-anxiety and carefulness, the door of repentance is closed against them ; their hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of riches, and the good seed, even if it find an entrance, is choked by the “ cares of this world, and the lusts of other things entering in.”

§ But chastisement brings self-condemnation, and that, along with continued trial, brings humility and tenderness of heart, and from humility comes confession, and with confession promise of amendment, and upon these comes the favour of God, and the Sun of Righteousness pours His loving beams upon them, and the hard, worldly heart is completely melted, and the work of true repentance goes on towards perfection.

Dear brethren, if any of us are making it the one aim of our lives to perfect our repentance, let us observe the directions of our Lord, and let us willingly spend of what He has committed to us, upon His debtors, our fellow-Christians who are in need. This is the rule : “ If thou hast much, give plenteously ; if thou hast little, do

thy diligence to give of that little." Give cheerfully what you do give, as to the Lord. Even a cup of cold water will be accepted, if it be given in the name of a disciple, as to one of Christ's members. Give kind attentions, and ready personal service, where you have nothing else to give. These are often far more needed, and indeed require greater sacrifice, than costly gifts. And whatever is done, let it be done in a cheerful spirit; not with much profession, but quietly and modestly, as a matter of course; not as if you were doing some great thing, but only as if doing what you are bid by One who has authority over you, and applying His gifts as He has directed you. And when you stand by the bed-side of those who are in pain, or sunk in great weakness, meditate upon the great love of our Saviour, who bore far more than you can witness of suffering, that you might be spared, and thank Him that He permits you to minister to those for whom He died; and pray Him to heal you of all disease, and to accept you at the last day for His goodness' sake.

And when you are pained at the sight of poverty and suffering, and as you try to relieve it or give comfort under it, think how for your sake He became poor, and pray Him that

you, and we all, those who minister and those who are ministered unto, and especially your own minister, and your own friends and neighbours, may through His poverty be made rich; pray Him to give us all that which shall be our own for ever, and to commit to our keeping "the true riches."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE SCIENCE OF SPIRITUAL THINGS.

1 COR. xii. 1. *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*

It is nothing new to say that we are ignorant of very much, not only of what is about us, but also of what is within us. Men have health, strength, experience, cleverness, a sense of what is fair and unfair, a judgment of what is right and wrong in common matters, and yet almost without knowing it. They make use of them, one day after another, without being aware of it: and in very many cases, they certainly could not give a distinct account of how, or why, or when, they became possessed of the habits or qualities I have mentioned. Concerning these natural or moral gifts they are ignorant.

And there are, I have no doubt, many instances of pious Christians, who live and act in

the same way. There are really good people, who have been used to do their duty, and believe in their Saviour from the time they were children, who have never thought *why* they were good, or found out exactly the cause of their doing right, or the reason of their belief. Now these people have spiritual gifts :—no one, who sees in another sincere faith, good and child-like hope, and real kind-heartedness and love to his brother men, can deny that these are the gifts of the Spirit :—but they themselves take them rather for things of course. They have never seriously asked themselves how far their good qualities, or, rather, their “spiritual gifts,” are their own, and come from themselves, or are God’s, and come from God. They would, very likely, from their habits of mind, if they were left to themselves, come very near to the truth ; but they are not certain to do so. They may make mistakes ; and they are exceedingly liable to be led wrong by others. They are ignorant concerning spiritual things. They have no theological knowledge.

Now theological knowledge is not, as we have seen, absolutely necessary for a Christian, and to have knowledge concerning spiritual gifts is not at all the same as having the gifts themselves.

Many a humble-minded Christian has been justified by faith, who never knew the meaning of the word "justification;" and some of the highest spiritual gifts are quite consistent with ignorance on spiritual matters. Why then, it may be said, should you trouble good people with difficult subjects, if the knowledge of them is not necessary to their salvation?—there are many disputes and differences about them in the world, and the worldly part of the Church;—that kind of knowledge has often been the occasion of schisms and heresies, and loss of charity;—why then should you attempt to give it to those, to whom you cannot be sure that it will prove a benefit, and to whom you may reasonably fear that it will turn out very much the reverse?

To such an argument as this, I can best reply in the words of St. Paul, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." It is true that if a Christian believes in One Almighty Father, Maker of earth and heaven, in One Redeeming Lord, the eternal Son of God, both God and man, and in One Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, that he is indeed "wise unto salvation." That faith is sufficient for time and for eternity; and while he keeps it

whole from error, and undefiled by sin, his feet are standing upon the rock beneath which the gates of hell shall open their jaws in vain. The holding that great mystery of faith and charity is the possession of the pearl of price; and the lacking and falling short of that will render all other gifts and powers vain and of no worth at all. But when he has that, it is not necessary for him to stand still: on the contrary, it is rather necessary that he should go on "to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," and to "desire to be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

There is such a thing as spiritual knowledge. We were not created in vain. The Spirit of God does not deal with us at random. There are facts in our spiritual being, as there are in our moral or physical being: there are laws and principles on which these facts depend; their causes and their effects may be traced out. There is a science of things spiritual, as there is a science of things moral, and of things natural.

These truths, St. Paul opens to the Corinthians. He shews them the mystery of their own nature; and he begins with the experience of their own

unregenerate state. In the heart of man which knows not God, there is yet an unconscious need of God: there is a yearning to listen to something higher, truer, holier than what it can tell itself; an instinctive will to follow happiness and light, if it could only be led unto them; an inborn craving for grace. In the dispensation of darkness, man's spirit had been left to itself, but it did not stand still: it made for itself dumb idols, and waited and listened to them, to hear if they would but speak to it: it followed the suggestions of its own vanity and sinfulness, even as it was led, while it was deaf to the voice of conscience, and blind to the guidance of the living Spirit. So it was with the Corinthians, he bids them remember, when they were Gentiles. Then came before their eyes, "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" and His presence, as by a second act of creation, separated in their souls, as it does in each human soul, the light from the darkness. All that was confused, and unknown, and disorderly before, was at once arranged and set right by the advent of incarnate truth and grace. They became "children of light." Then could be plainly seen who would follow the Spirit of God, and who would refuse; who had the Spirit, and who had not. This was the first

portion of the science of spiritual things, this its leading principle. He who refused or denied the Lord Jesus, he who cut off the Saviour from himself, and cut off himself from the Saviour, either in the recesses of his own soul by presumptuous, unbelieving thoughts, or in the society of his fellows by blaspheming, hardened words, or in his life and course of action, by selfish, calculated, unrepented sin, he was neither thinking, speaking, nor acting by the Spirit of God; in such an one there was no new nature. He knew not what grace was: he had trampled under foot the gift of Pentecost. But when on the other hand a man, either at the solemn hour of his Baptism had confessed, or in his life after Baptism was preparing to confess, that "Jesus is the Lord," by bringing the motions and workings of his own inner soul into subjection to the law of love, by teaching his mouth to utter fervently the truth his heart believed, and striving to confess boldly, in spite of mockery or threatening, "the faith once delivered to the Saints," the faith of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, our Lord: or again, by ruling his doings among men by His commandments, and seeking how, at last, his deeds might stand approved by Him to whom all power is given in earth and

heaven, "King of kings, and Lord of lords : " such an one,—whether a little child praying by his mother's knee, or an apostle, ready to be offered up ;—whether least or greatest in the kingdom of heaven, such an one was led by the Spirit of God, and had the Spirit of God ; " for no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Here then is a principle to go upon, a plain, broad, grand distinction between those who are spiritual and those who are not spiritual.

But there are still other steps in this science of spiritual things. Spiritual men are different : the elect are not all alike : here, on earth, one saint differeth from another saint in grace, and the use of grace ; as in the sky above us, one star differeth from another star in glory : one is filled full of " the word of wisdom," pure and peaceable ; another is endowed with " the word of knowledge," to search out, and to gain an insight into truth for himself, and to freely give to others the light of knowledge he has so freely received ; another, in adoring faith, is striving in heart and mind to ascend to heaven, and there to dwell with Christ, his Lord, continually ; another abides on earth to heal the sorrows and the pains of his brother, in the power of holy charity ;

one can speak, and another can interpret. There are indeed diversities of gifts in Christ's holy Church: Mary will listen, and Martha serve: Peter shall feed the lambs, and Nathanael be without guile: Paul shall burn with zeal, and John with love: yet in this multiplicity of gifts there is no clashing and no opposition, for there is a unity and identity in the Giver. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." It is "the same Spirit," Who is the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, whose gifts of grace are manifold, but yet who sanctifieth each one and all of the elect people of God.

But again, all in the visible Church do not hold the same place, nor have all the same office. In holy Baptism, indeed, all have received the one great gift,—the new nature; and are consecrated with the one mighty unction of the Holy Ghost, to be "kings and priests unto God;" but from among these, some are peculiarly chosen and ordained to peculiar spiritual duties and functions. Some have to bear rule: upon them cometh the care of the Churches, as called into the place of those whom our Lord sent forth, when He had first passed the night in prayer:

others are to be the stewards of His sacraments, the ministers of His means of grace, the preachers of His gospel; and others, again, are set to aid these in discharging their office and work of love within the Church. There are, and ever have been these orders in the Church, bishops, priests and deacons, for "there are differences of administrations:" they do not choose themselves, because "He hath chosen them, and ordained them:" they cannot choose themselves, because that which they have to do is beyond themselves, and utterly out of their power. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and yet in the font, by which they stand, there is but water. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you;" and yet, all that man can give, are the mere elements of bread and wine. They have "to watch over our souls as they that must give account;" and yet, "who can forgive sins, but God alone?" They have each, in their order, their differences of administration; but what they are, they seem not; and what they do, they themselves do not, but that "same Lord," Who is Light of Light, and very God of very God. He it is, and not man, who receiveth the little

child into "the everlasting benediction of His heavenly washing : " He it is, and not man, Who saith, " Take, eat ; This is My Body : " He it is, and not man, who rules over His Church, absolving their sins, and giving to each one his place and office, and to each one His power and Spirit, Himself ruling, working, doing, in all, and over all, who redeemed each one and all mankind.

Once more :—How differently does grace work in different men, and how diverse are the effects of the ministrations of Christ's ministers in different portions of the Church ! How few, among Christian men, are what they ought to be,—how few are what they might be ! Among the sincere and the honest-hearted, the fruit of faith is not sixty, or thirty fold, but ten, or five fold, scarcely. Opportunities are every where being lost ; mercies are continually being disregarded ; and sins of omission are rife, even where sins of commission may seem to be fewer than with most. In the loftiest feelings there are matters for sorrow and self-abasement ; and for disappointment in the highest aims. In the heart of the regenerate there is still the flesh warring against the spirit ; and in the life of the saint, the besetting sin is repeated, even to seven times a-day.

And in the various portions of the visible

Church, "the evil is ever mingled with the good." Divisions and oppositions, errors in doctrine and indifference to privileges, self-exaltation and self-sufficiency, condemnation of other Christians, even to anathemas, and money-worship and lukewarmness, on this side and on that, imperil charity, and go well-nigh to mar the Church's own appointed work. And because of these shortcomings and failings, the man of this world looks coldly on, and denies the reality of any visible Church of Christ at all, and any communion of saints at all. Nothing will satisfy him but transcendent holiness; and he asks for striking, unmistakable results, before he will acknowledge that the Lord is with His Church. He is ignorant of spiritual things, and knows not that "there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, that worketh all in all." The same Almighty God, who once made and still worketh in the material world, worketh still in the spiritual universe of grace. He doeth "all in all;" the outer operations of nature, and the inner operations of grace, are His, and from Him, alike. The laws of both stand by Him; the causes of both are in His power, and "when He calleth them, they say, Here we be." As the heavens declare His glory, so the earth sheweth forth His grace; and in

both, nothing can be so small, or so great, as to be beyond His grace, and nothing can be so small, or so great, as to be beyond His power. It is here, especially, that the ignorant in spiritual things fail: they forget, or they do not perceive, that the smallest things are from Him, and ruled by Him, as much as are the greatest; that not only every "perfect gift," but every gift that is in any wise "good" at all, cometh down from Him,—the slightest impulse in the sinner towards forsaking evil, equally with the extatic prayer of him in whom love hath cast out fear. Yes, from the first pang of awakened conscience to the full "joy in believing," through all the long work of casting down pride, and chastening impurity of heart, and denying selfishness and self-will, it is His "operation." Diverse as are the means He uses with our sinful hearts, through all "He worketh within us to will and to do of His good pleasure," until we, once afar from Him, become "His workmanship, created through Jesus Christ unto good works."

No otherwise is it in the visible Church on earth: He is working in it, we know by faith. It is militant: "he that letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way." The imperfections and shortcomings in what is good are signs of

the struggle going on. There can be no silence, nor peace, till the battle is either won or lost. The Church is at one time weak, as it is at another strong, because there are in it too "diversities of operations," according to His mysterious dispensations, and our use or abuse of His gifts; yet in His strength our weakness will at last be made perfect, and imperfect means will work out their perfect end in His disposal.

Yes, my brothers, we stand within the scheme of salvation, and we cannot know and see all its completeness, its order and its power; yet mysterious, intricate, and hidden from our eyes as it is, it still works on its irresistible course in mute obedience to that voice which is "mighty in operation." In the energy of creating, redeeming, sanctifying love, "all things work together for good to them that love God,"—work, in spite of their own frailty, their own negligence, their own ignorance,—work, until the number of the elect is accomplished, and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Son, and that end is come which setteth the crown eternally upon His Almighty work.

Thus, in few words, but yet most fully and most plainly, does the apostle set forth the principles of the science of spiritual things, and tells

us that which is most useful for us to know, and of which he would not that we should be ignorant. And, if any would go on to trace out more perfectly the mysteries of the world of grace, that is to say, of Christ's universal Church, the way is open to them, but they must walk in it reverently. If they are rash, they will stumble; if they are proud, they are sure to err; self-will, then, is the same with ignorance. It is only by degrees that we can understand even a little of the ways of God; we cannot all at once. We shall gain that knowledge by waiting for it, as we win grace by yielding to it. If we look upwards, and not downwards,—if we begin from God, not from ourselves,—if we abide patiently, and watch, and ask, not that our own fancies and opinions may be proved to be right, but, that the truth of God may be made clear to us, then at length we shall receive. Then, little by little, our spiritual sight will be quickened; one marvel after another will open before us, one mystery after another of the spiritual world will be revealed to our understanding, until somewhat of its mightiness, and its inner glory, lies displayed before our view, and we gain a glimpse of the vastness of the plan of Almighty God for man's redemption, and the effectual working of His power and Pro-

vidence in carrying it on unto its end. Then shall we see the Lord Jesus ever within His Church, according to His promise, sending forth His ministers, as He sent them forth of old, and Himself going with them, as the One who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," and as the one "great High Priest," and as "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." The offices which they execute, the honour with which they are invested, the holiness with which they are clothed, will be seen to be glorious shadows cast down upon them from Him who standeth ever before the throne, arrayed in the garments of an everlasting priesthood. And then we shall feel and know, that each one of the Christian men among whom we live, and with whom we talk, has, even though he knows it not, a place to fill in the Church, and a duty to discharge, appointed and assigned to him, whether it be low or high, easy or hard, by the Holy Spirit, at His own all-wise will; and that gifts have been bestowed upon him to fit him for his place, and grace to persevere until his duty be fully done: that if he turn back, or fall short, the work of God is but delayed; and His plan is not marred, but will be taken up and carried on, until it be made perfect. And so then will rise within us,

as we gaze upon the Church on earth, which seems now so forsaken and confused,—a perception of that order and eternal beauty, of which the fulness is in heaven.

Thus may we learn the apostle's lesson, the sum of which is this :—All we are, and all we have, all within ourselves and without ourselves, all that concerns us and our spiritual life, in any way, is from above ; is given to us by the Holy Ghost ; is ministered to us by the Lord, who died ; is wrought in us by our Father which is in heaven. This we are not to be ignorant of ; this is “the word of knowledge” given unto us to “profit withal ;” to profit in ever drawing nearer to His Cross, and growing ever in His love, by whom we all, both far and near, “have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

SEEING JESUS.

1 COR. XV. 8. *Last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

MANY of you, my brothers, have no doubt often thought to yourselves, that you would have gladly lived in the times of the apostles, and have seen the face of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. "We would see Jesus," is not the wish of one time only, or of men of one nation only; it is rather the natural enquiry and request of those who are journeying as pilgrims in a strange land, and are seeking the way to their father's home. As you read the gospel story, you have perhaps pictured to yourselves the way in which the things happened that are recorded in it: you have fancied that you saw Him waiting while the blind man eagerly, and yet slowly, arose and came to Him; or heard Him, when He said to the weeping woman who had washed His feet with her tears, "Thy sins are forgiven

thee;" or beheld Him as He "turned and looked upon Peter" in the hall. And yet, even if you realized these things to yourselves as vividly as you were able, you have felt all the time that your thoughts and fancies must be far beneath the truth; that the influence of His presence, the power of His word, the love of His look, must have sunk still more deeply and strangely into the heart; and therefore you have believed that it would have been good for you to have been there then,—to have felt, and heard, and seen them in very deed. Let us try and see how far this is true, and to what extent we may carry it out.

I shall but just allude to the old tradition, or perhaps rather parable, which said, that to the humble and pure in heart, there shone in the countenance of the Lord the brightness of divinity, and the perfect beauty of heaven; while the glory and the perfectness of His earthly form was, like that of His gospel, "hid to them that are lost," and that they saw in Him a mere common man. But I think and believe, that the seeing the Saviour was no light thing, or to be thought of as such. It wrought a change in men and on men. "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father," are His own words of

it. It was seeing God. It divided some men from others,—that is, the earnest from the insincere. It discerned the very thoughts and intents of the heart in the same one man, and set, as it were, what was true, and honest, and holy in him, on the one side, and what was frivolous, and false, and vile in him, on the other. It was a trial, a sort of judgment, on those to whom that sight came; they were not the same after it as they were before it. For instance, Nathanael “came and saw” Jesus, and his doubting and hesitating spirit was gone at once: “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel,” was the only thought that took possession of him; and so he left father and mother, house and possessions, and became an apostle, and received power from on high to convert and to guide the world. Again, Herod was “desirous to see Him of a long season,” and when his wish was fulfilled, and he did see Him, he “set Him at nought,” and mocked Him, and sent Him back to Pilate. The one had an earnest, “guileless” wish for truth, the other a desire to have his curiosity gratified; and the seeing Jesus tried them both, and judged them both,—the one for his gain, the other for his loss.

Zacchæus too “sought to see Jesus,” and when the Saviour came to the place where he was, he “made haste and received Him joyfully;” but he was a changed man from that time forth: “The half of his goods he gave to the poor,” and made at once a fourfold restitution for all his unfair dealings, and so salvation came to his house, and he lost not his inheritance among the children of faithful Abraham.

And those five hundred brethren of whom He was seen at once in Galilee, could not from thenceforth walk, as other men walked, “in the vanity of their minds:” in that sight a change would be wrought in them, and they could no longer go on contentedly in indifference, lukewarmness, and self-deceit; they must be led, we may well conceive, by that sight, to “rise with Christ,” and to “set their affection on things above.”

One still more striking instance this Sunday's teaching brings before us, in the life and work of the apostle of the Gentiles. He, who was emphatically a “Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee,” and the disciple of a Pharisee; “profiting above his equals” in the religion and traditions of his nation; “fasting twice in the week, and giving tithes of all that he possessed,” for he was, “as

touching the law, blameless ;” “ thanking God that he was not as other men are, or even” as Christ’s martyr, Stephen, unto whose death he had been consenting. Surely, if any, he might seem to be born out of due time ; born too late for grace, too late for change of heart, too late for holy love, too late for full humility ; born when the law was done with, its types fulfilled, its righteousness proved to be imperfect, its sacrifices consummated and done away with for ever. Yet it was not so. Jesus was seen of him also ; “ last of all,” it is true, but yet He was seen ; and the self-exalted Pharisee became even as the humbled and repentant Publican. Heaven opened, the Saviour looked down upon him ; He said, “ I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest ;” and all his self-hope and self-trust was gone, and the darkness of his soul was once for all dispelled by “ the glory of that light ;” trembling and astonished, “ he durst not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven.” He could but say, in utter self-surrender and abasement, “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?” In that sight of Jesus was a revelation not only of God to him, but of himself to himself. Brief as it had been, yet it was sufficient. Grace had come ; mercy had laid her hand upon him, and

he was changed. Old things had passed away; from thenceforth all things to him were new. In it lay a new birth, a new nature, a new faith, a new covenant, a new law, a new priesthood, a new Church. His life was changed, as his thoughts were changed. He had been a persecutor of the Church,—he was now to be an apostle in it; he had been “a Hebrew of the Hebrews,” and he was to be “sent far hence unto the Gentiles;” to go on Christ’s way, not his own, until he came to the house prepared for him and the redeemed in heaven, “justified” from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. He had seen Jesus, and the image of Him whom he had seen was to be wrought into his very heart and life. Nay! more, he was to cease to be himself: the things which he did were to be no more his own deeds, and the life which he lived, was to be not his own life, but Christ living in him. So did he humble himself, and so was he exalted. He was “the least of the apostles,” and deemed himself “not meet to be called an apostle,” yet, in the power of that humility, he “laboured more abundantly than they all;” yet his labours were not from his own spirit of self-sacrifice, but from “the grace of God which was with him.”

Dear, indeed, and very precious, must have been the thought of that sight to the memory of the apostle of the Gentiles ! While the Christ was in Galilee, in Samaria, in Judæa, he had not seen Him ; he had not, as others had, hallowing recollections of the well of Jacob, thoughts that could wander by the Lake of Gennesaret, or dwell upon the Mount of Olives. It had not been his lot to sit down at the last supper of the Lord, or to stand in awe-struck sorrow near His cross. It had not been vouchsafed to him to see His hands and side, or to receive from Him the breathing of His Spirit, or to behold Him ascend within the cloud. In all these things he was the least of the apostles ; he seemed so far to have been “born out of due time ;” yet he had once seen Him,—had seen Him in His glory and His power, reckoning the sufferings of His people to be His own ; and the burning memory of that one sight was deep within his soul, changeless and quenchless for time and for eternity.

This, then, was the seeing Jesus ; and thus that sight wrought with those to whom it was granted, and who were not unworthy. It may be a matter of very useful meditation for us, as to how far we each one might be meet and ready for it.

We, my brothers, with our bodily eyes, have

not, and cannot now see Christ ; but though we have not the privilege, yet do we lose nothing thereby. Our gain is rather the greater ; for He Himself has said, “ Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.” A cloud received Him out of our sight on the first Ascension-day ; but though He sitteth on the right hand of God, “ invisible ” to eyes of mortal flesh, yet may we still patiently endure, and wait in faith, as still “ seeing Him.” We have been told, that when we see Him in heaven as He is, we shall be made like Him ; so also, in proportion as we become like Him on earth, shall we see Him here. We have been once for all made members of His Body in holy Baptism ; if our baptismal garments have been kept spotless and undefiled, then may we come to Him, and kneel before Him, and see Him, and He will lay His hand upon us, and bless us,—not in fancy, but in spiritual reality,—in the ordinances of His Church. If we would win His grace, and will repent, and believe, and forgive, and love, then may we see Him, even as the disciples saw Him the night before He suffered, giving to us that living Bread, and saying to us, as He did to them, “ Take, eat ; this is My Body.” If, as perhaps some of you, my brothers, have done, we have long despised

our birthright, and have been negligent of the grace so freely offered, and have gone on far and long in blinded selfishness and spiteful sin, yet will His mercy still be found more enduring than our hard-heartedness, and His love stronger than our deadness of spirit. Let us not tarry longer, but go, late though it be, to His temple, where He is to be found, and, smiting our breast, and not daring, for our vileness, to lift up our eyes to that heaven we have so deeply forfeited, let us from our inmost soul pray, with the Publican, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner;" and He, even Jesus Christ the Saviour, will be seen of us also, although born, as it were, out of due time; and will say, with the same voice of mercy as of old, "Thy sins be forgiven thee: go in peace." His charity never faileth. His miracles of grace are wrought as freely now as His miracles of healing were of old. And if we love Him, if we keep His commandments, He will come unto us, and manifest Himself unto us, and we shall see Him, and seeing Him, shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

Oh that our faith might be increased more and ever more, that our spiritual sight might be no more dimmed with the mists of earth, the eyes of our soul be no longer blinded with the veil of

wilful ignorance, so that we might ever see Him, where He ever is, near unto His elect ! Then might we see His look of patience and of sorrow, as He watched over the wayward and the ungodly, and we might pray for them with pitying patience too. Then might we see His look of tenderness and sympathy for the poor and the heavy laden, and we might deal tenderly and kindly with them too. Then might we see His love towards His little ones, and love them too. Then might we see Him, now and here, as we shall see Him hereafter, even beholding us “ face to face,” and watching Him, and dwelling upon Him, and moulding ourselves by Him, if so be we might become yet more like Him Whose we are. Then could we repent indeed ! for what heart could be so bound by sin, that would not be “ pierced, rent, crushed,” in very truth, if once He were to stand before it, and to say, “ Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself.”

Thus, then, let us wish to see Jesus ; and thus let us pray that we may see Him, catching the reflection of His countenance “ through a glass darkly,” until the time of that revelation when we shall see Him “ face to face.”

Faith must go before sight ; but sight will

come at length. The hour is drawing nearer and ever nearer, when all flesh must see Him, when He shall come again with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, both they who loved Him, and they who pierced Him, with their unrepented sins. The time is not long that we have to wait; it is but "a little while" in comparison with the eternity beyond. However downcast we may be at our own weakness of faith, however sorrowful for our unnumbered presumptions upon His mercy and His love, however we may "weep and lament" over our evil doings, and this life of ours may seem a weariness and a burden, because we see Him not, still, through all His promises standing sure,—“Again a little while, and ye shall see Me.” We shall see fully, clearly, perfectly, as He shall then see us; and the words at which His disciples stumbled shall receive their entire accomplishment: “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” Then they who have looked for Him in holiness, they who have ever striven to set Him before them, and to direct their steps in His way, will be able to lift up their heads, and see Him when He comes with joy.

Yes! in that last time of all, His redeemed shall see Him indeed; and the fearfulness of the

judgment hour—the dissolving of earth, and the passing away of heaven—will be to them unheeded and unseen, for the eagerness with which they shall hearken to their Saviour's word, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" and the love with which they shall gaze upon their Saviour's face, from thenceforth turned away from them no more for ever.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE GLORY OF THE NEW LAW.

2 COR. iii. 9. *For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.*

THE epistle of this day presents us with a contrast between the dispensation of Sinai and the dispensation of the Gospel, to which that earlier law was a preparation. It is the echo of our Whitsuntide thoughts,—an echo of the praise in which the servants of the second Pentecost recall, with mingled faith and fear, the terrible glories of the first.

On that tremendous day He bowed the heavens and came down, and it was dark under His feet; He rode upon the cherubs and did fly, He came flying upon the wings of the wind. There was a voice of words and a sound of trumpets exceeding loud. Even Moses, who spake face to face with Him, did exceedingly fear and quake.

He came down with all the circumstances of fear, and the law that He gave them was a law of fear, a good and holy law, but strict in its requirements, terrible in its punishments. The terrors of it went through the whole outer life of the people : as members of a state they were bound by its political enactments, as members of a religious body by its ceremonial ones, as individuals by its moral commandments ; it followed them from birth to death ; it received them on the eighth day, when they were circumcised, and kept them, under strict rules and by the fear of punishment, all through their life, abroad and at home, in private and public business, and in the various ceremonies of that religion by which they were bound to God. Under it they grew and multiplied ; when they neglected it they fell into trouble, when they obeyed it they prospered, until, in the reign of Solomon, the vine that was brought up out of Egypt and planted in Emmanuel's land, stretched out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Again they forsook it, and then the wild boar out of the wood did root it up, and the wild beasts devoured it.

God did indeed turn, looked down from heaven, and beheld and visited that vine. His only Son came to fulfil the law and the prophets ; but

they rejected Him, and with Him the law and the prophets ; and the Son of God being rejected by them, they were also rejected from being the people of God and of His law.

And so that law passed away ; its moral precepts were re-enacted by our Lord in a spiritual and more stringent form ; but its ceremonial commandments, being typical of what Christ should do, had fulfilled their end when He had done what they typified. And as the knowledge of the true God was to be confined no more to one people, but all nations were to be made one in the universal law of liberty, there was no need of those political commandments by which the seed of Abraham had been hedged in.

The apostles, by Christ's command, were assembled at Jerusalem to await the new promise of the Father. And on the great festival-day of Pentecost the Lord descended a second time with a sound as of a rushing mighty wind ; the Holy Ghost came and sat upon them in cloven tongues as of fire ; the sound of the rushing wind was as when He came flying upon the wings of the wind to Sinai, the tongues of fire as the flames which lighted the dark heaven under His feet. There was no sound of trumpets here, nor even a voice of words ; the law that was enacted now

was put into the minds of the twelve; it reminded them of all that their Lord had said unto them; there were no tables of stone, but it was not the less written with the finger of God on the fleshy tables of the heart. The law was not to be taken away, as the Jewish law; for the Comforter, now that He is come, abides with the chosen people for ever; for ever, as is the presence of Christ unto the end of the world, to bring them from glory to glory into the eternal and unchangeable glory of the Lord.

Moses, as the representative of the Jewish people, received, from beholding the glory of Jehovah, a bright shining countenance, which he was fain to veil, lest the people should not be able to look upon him. And now, as St. Paul says, did that veil continue on their hearts, so that they understood not the real and spiritual character of the law, and, whilst they continued in unbelief, saw not Christ in the law.

But when the law of Christ was given it was imparted to the twelve, signifying that all nations should be partakers of it, in that the first sign of its working was their speaking in all languages; and there was no need of a veil on them, for the word which was by their preaching was to shew to every heart the deep things of God. The law,

which the Holy Ghost brought was like the law of Moses in its going into every particular of men's lives. It keeps them good men; it keeps them devout and religious, it keeps them good and faithful citizens. It teaches our duty towards God: to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all the heart and all the mind, and with all the soul and with all the strength. It teaches the duty towards our neighbour: to love him as ourselves; to do unto all men what we would that they should do unto us. It keeps men good subjects, for their rule is obedience; and obeying authorities and powers they obey God, whose hand is seen in the appointing those authorities and powers; and, by God's help, they conduct themselves well in that state of life in which it shall have pleased God to place them. But is this all? surely not. It was not merely to conduct men safely and honourably through this world that the Holy Ghost came; not that they might act peaceably, and obediently, and benevolently towards those who are put in any relation to them; it was all this truly, but not only this. It was to give eternal life that the Holy Ghost came down, and the law He came to promulgate was the law of life, the Gospel of life. And the world He came to

spread this knowledge in was not only the outer world,—the Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia,—but in the little inner world, the kingdom of the soul, man's heart, in which dwells so much that needs a law, so much that, acted on graciously, might go heavenwards in act and will. In this world of the heart the Holy Ghost writes the new law; the conscience of man acts as judge now according to that new law; and by that new law are his passions ruled, and the springs of his actions administered and kept in order.

The Spirit is a law for this life; but, higher still, it is a law for eternity, for it not only brings us through this world, but into the next. It keeps in our mind that we are by our baptism members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. It keeps in our mind that the world we live in is not our rest, and that we cannot trust in it as our abiding place without going far to forfeit the eternal mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare for us. It keeps in our minds the cross we have taken, or ought to have taken, up, that we may follow our Lord through sorrow to glory. He, guiding us, brings us heavenwards; enlightening us, he kindles the fire of love and

the lamp of spiritual wisdom in our soul ; teaching us, He brings to our remembrance what our Lord teaches us, what He did for us once, what He does for us now, what He will do for us in the end of the world ; comforting us, He soothes us in trouble outward and inward, helps us in our want of faith, in our lack of hope ; helps us to be ardent in charity, comforts us when God seems to be hiding His face, when He is pleased to afflict us, when He seems to leave us alone, in all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, and in the hour of death.

Still we must not forget that the law of Sinai and the law of the Spirit in the Gospel had one and the same Author, and were intended to further one and the same great end. The Author was the same eternal God whose Spirit moved on the face of the waters before the creation, who breathed into men's nostrils the breath of life ; that Spirit was in the heart of those holy men who wrote the Books of the Old Testament, as well as in that of the apostles and evangelists of the New. And the same God gave the law on Sinai who gave, and now gives, laws to the people of God. For we believe in one God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The God of the Jews is the God of Christians ; no new God, but the same Jehovah made known in the Gospel to all na-

tions. And so both are parts of one scheme of salvation ; but this, when it was given to the Jews, was through a law of fear.

Yet the sacrifices of the Jews looked to the sacrifice of Christ ; all their ordinances had, to the spiritual mind, a spiritual meaning.

Again, the moral law, as we have seen, was well-nigh the same in words, but with a more spiritual interpretation authoritatively added to it, and one new commandment of love. And the civil precepts had their aim in keeping the people of the Messiah and of the law separate from sinners and idolaters. So the law was a school-master to bring the world to Christ, a stage in the progress of the work of redemption. And though now in the Gospel the ordinances and civil precepts are done away, it is not because such are not required, but because the old were shadows, and the substance is now come ; they were means to an end, which, being answered, there is now place for others. The Holy Ghost gives us laws corresponding to these old ones. It gives a moral law and keeps us in it ; that is the straight gate and narrow path of those who are to follow Christ to glory,—pure lives, holy lives, penitent lives, lives of self-denial, and love of God and man.

In ordering the services of the Church the Holy Ghost is with us, quickening us in all the services of the sanctuary, in the common prayer, and praise, and hearing of the Word, as it is read and as it is preached. He is with us in the sacraments ; coming first at our baptism, confirming His gifts at our confirmation, and giving us, every time we come to the table of our Lord, increased union with Him and increase of His gifts. And by His aid the Church is separated from the world, as the Jews were from the Gentiles, to be a holy nation, a peculiar people. God forbid that we should sell the inheritance of our fathers unto the stranger. God forbid that, once made partakers of His kingdom on earth, we should desert our standard or disown our allegiance. The Israelites fell away to idols ; there are idols also with which Satan tempts us : lust, honour, wealth, the cares of this world,—after all these things do the Gentiles seek. But our Heavenly Father hath provided better things for us, if we will keep with Him until the end : a better country, even a heavenly, far above that land of promise, though it flowed with milk and honey.

Bearing this law, by the observance of which the family of God is called out of the world,

the twelve apostles went forth, and on the very day that the Holy Ghost descended they began to preach. Christ had ascended up on high, had led captivity captive, and had received gifts for men. Then came the gifts: Thou, O God, sentest a gracious rain upon Thine inheritance, and refreshedst it when it was weary. Thy congregation shall dwell therein, for Thou, O God, hast of Thy goodness prepared for the poor. The Lord gave the word: great was the company of the preachers.

In the lifetime of the apostles the joyful Gospel sound was heard through all the world that men then knew of; the isles of all the seas that ships sailed over heard the message of Jesus; from every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue were men gathered in to the innumerable host who shall sing Hallelujah.

The twelve, when they died, did not leave the Church without the Spirit they had received; but they chose faithful men, who were, like them, ministers of the Word and Sacraments: these followed their teachers, the Holy Ghost dwelling in them; and they handed down to us, the priests of this day, the gifts they had received in the day of Pentecost. So the Holy Ghost, in the Sacraments which are administered to you,

comes to you as certainly as He would from the apostles themselves. Once, first, in your baptism He came and dwelt in you, though no mortal eye saw the tongues of fire, or ear heard the sound of the wind rushing down to quicken the new-made Christian child. And, dwelling in you in your childhood, He prompted you to all the good acts that you did in childhood; and in youth, restraining your evil propensities, He tried to keep you temperate and continent. And a second time, by the laying on of hands in your confirmation, He gave you a strengthened possession of his sevenfold gifts, which may abide in you for ever, the responsibility of which will never leave you, doubly marked out thereby for good or for evil, as being of the regenerate family of God.

And again, most especially when we celebrate the Holy Communion is He pleased to come to us. The Holy Ghost is there with us, and He makes His abode in our hearts, and renews us in good-will and desires of good action.

Himself having given the law, and made us in our baptism subjects to it, He gives us in this holy ordinance strength to keep it; He makes it a renewal of the law in our mind: He makes them a mark of profession, by which they are

known who have chosen the Lord's side, who are sensible of their high calling, and desirous to work on their high privilege. It is again the sign of the ceremonial law, that by which Christ has desired to be remembered, and in which we set forth His most precious death until He comes again. And it is the help to all virtuous and godly living and keeping of the law of holy works with all our might, soul, heart, and strength. Come to His table, and you shall not go away without the assurance that Jesus has loved you, and died and given Himself for you, and does give Himself to you in this Sacrament; that in it He is with you always, even unto the end of the world; and in it He sends His Holy Ghost to comfort you, and give you strength to follow where your Saviour Christ is gone before. O, if God came in wrath, and fire, and flame, and with trumpets of judgment, and hell was open for punishment, you would not disregard Him; then why will you when He comes in love, and gives Himself to you as a friend and helper? You believe that He will come one day in judgment, why will you not believe that He comes now, and here? You have the same word for both.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE LAW OF LIFE.

GALATIANS iii. 16—22. *To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, That the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

THE salvation which is by Jesus Christ came by the promise; the preparation for salvation

was by the law ; the law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ : the Jews were the people of the preparation, the people of the law ; we, beloved, are the children of the promise. No sooner was the perfection of the creation spoiled by the sin of Adam, than its restoration was promised in the seed of the woman. That promise was made again to Abraham ; in his seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed. That which had been lost for all the earth by the sin of the first Adam, was to be restored by the obedience of a second Adam. He was to come as Man, and be God as well.

For His ancestor, as man, God chose Abraham, His friend ; deserving by the faith in which he left his own country at God's call, and went out knowing not whither he went ; in which he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise ; in which he looked for a city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God ; in which he offered up his son Isaac, which also is imputed unto him for righteousness, deserving by this faith to be called the father of the faithful. He pleased God, and so God chose him to be the forefather of the Messiah. God became his

shield, and his exceeding great reward. God gave him a promise; he, believing that promise, earned the fulfilment of it. God gave him a command; he, obeying, obtained of God a surpassing glory; that he who had offered Isaac in faith, should in ages to come be called Father by the Almighty Offering, Christ the slain on Calvary; that he who, offering the heir of the promise, seemed to be executing a command which would put that promise to an end for evermore, should by all ages and generations of the faithful be called Father also,—father of a more abundant, and holy, and faithful new posterity.

And what was this promise? Not of the land of Canaan only; the blessing of the whole earth in the seed of Abraham, that was the promise. There were temporal and transitory promises, made to preserve the race of the faithful till the Messiah should come. But the Promise was *salvation*. In the fulness of time He was to bring it; when God should will, or from the foundation of the world had ordained. We might enquire why God should fix the fulness of the time when He did, or why He should choose out especially a nation among whom He would place the partial knowledge of His name and will. But there is no need: the children of wisdom

will justify her. He fixed these things as it pleased Him.

The promise which was fulfilled in Jesus was made to Abraham, but it extended to all creation. The transitory promises were to the children of his natural seed, the grand promise of the Messiah to the children of his faith. The Jews failed to realize this: their portion of the promises was the exclusive gift of salvation; it was their honour to be the kinsmen of Christ after the flesh, to be the keepers of the oracles of God, to be, if they pleased, the first-fruits of creation. They had the promises, naturally they should be the first to hear the joyful sound, and to see the shining of the great Light that should spring up among them. But Christ is our Lord as well as theirs. Nay, they cut themselves off from Him: by their alienation are we the shoots of the wild olive grafted in: blindness in part happened unto Israel, that the fulness of the Gentiles might come in. Thus the diminishing of the Israelites, through blindness and unbelief, was the means, under God's providence, of bringing us in who were afar off. For what, then, did He choose the people of Israel? It was that the memory of His work of creation might not perish; that the knowledge of the loss of mankind by sin.

might not be forgotten ; that the promise of a seed which should crush the power of Satan might be kept in remembrance ; that He might have a witness in His chosen against the sins of the rest of the world.

And to the furtherance of this purpose He gave the law to Moses. Four hundred and thirty years after the promise He gave the law. During all that time He had prepared His people for obedience : He had brought them through prosperity and adversity ; from being as princes in Egypt, from making bricks for their daily task, through the Red Sea, on the high road to the land of promise. He had not so done it, that they might think it had been done by chance. He had sent Moses to them, to tell them what He would do ; then He had done it. He had given signs and wonders in the midst of the land, He had brought them out with a high hand and a stretched-out arm. They had had proof enough to satisfy the longings of faith, and enough love shewn them to merit the obedience of love. So He gave them the law. The character of the law is the subject of the epistle of to-day.

It was subservient to the fulfilment of the promise. It could not disannul the promise

made four hundred years before. It could not restrict to the stock of Abraham the salvation which had been promised in Paradise; it could not restrict to the stock of Abraham the salvation which had been promised to Abraham for all the families of the earth. It was a just law, a holy law, a law by which, if righteousness could have come by any law, it might have come; for it was made by God, and He could not err either in the kind or the measure of the obedience that He required. But God never intended that it should save the world. That was the great mistake of the Jews. They thought that none but the natural seed of Abraham were to be accounted sons of God; and that to those who kept the law in its letter salvation was due, not as a gift, but as a debt. It was not clear that faith and holiness were the marks of the seed of the faithful Abraham, nor that the salvation to be bestowed freely on the Gentiles also, would work in all who received it the Sonship of God. The Epistle to the Galatians was written chiefly to combat this notion of the Jews: that those who hoped to be saved through Jesus must be just according to the law of Moses. These men were trying to unite what were distinct; to insert, as it were, into the new garment the patches of that

which had served them well before, but was now worn out and superseded.

The law was superseded. It was a school-master to bring men to Christ. Christ being come, there was no need of it now. The types and figures of the good things to come, beautiful and glorious as they had been before, sank into insignificance by the side of the realities when they came. No more was the ark of the covenant needed to magnify the law, which had its highest honour and its end in the fact that Christ had fulfilled it. The manna was no longer the only bread that came down from heaven. Aaron's rod, that budded, had yielded place to the true branch, the Priest for ever. Instead of shew-bread for the Church within the tabernacle, Christ had left the sacrament of His Body and Blood, the true bread of life, not only a figure of that of which the shew-bread had been a figure, but the real spiritual food of the soul, giving union with Christ to those who partake of it. So, too, the golden candlestick was no more significant when the true Light was shining, or the altar of incense when He was gone up, and was offering to the Father the sweet savour of the prayers of the saints. The types were fulfilled; the ceremonial law, a law of types such as these, being ful-

filled, its work was over. And so with the civil precepts : when Shiloh came, the lawgiver and the sceptre being departed from Judah, the gathering of all people was to Him ; the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was broken down ; the law, whose work was to maintain that wall, must not remain for a stumbling-block to the children of God. The moral law Jesus had enacted over again with a spiritual interpretation and a new commandment. So while He fulfilled, He also finished, the law. When Jesus had put an end to it, any attempt to restore it was to take away from the completeness of His work.

Yet some men had tried to revive it and make it binding on all Christians, contrary to the liberty which Christ had left them. St. Paul shews in the present passage that salvation was to be by promise, and not by the law. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise ; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Wherefore, then, serveth the law ?

We have seen, partly, that it was to keep the Jews a separate people for a time : if it lasted beyond its time, it would separate them from salvation, not for it ; it was to keep alive a spiritual worship, worthy in some measure of God, to whom it was paid, and to furnish types and

shadows of good things to come. Here the apostle answers the question another way: it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made.

It was added because of transgressions. With the promise made to Abraham God made no conditions. He added the law to humble men's proud hearts. It was a good law, a holy law, a just law; if by any law men might be saved, they might be saved by this. If they failed in keeping this, they might be made to see that salvation came of God, and of Him alone; it would make men look on to Christ. At once it taught men to avoid sin, by its authoritative warnings and precepts, and it increased sin, for by the law was the knowledge of sin. Sin abounded by it, that God might include all under sin, and shew mercy the more abundantly in Jesus, for that all had sinned. The law then, as a schoolmaster, led the way to the Gospel, the glad tidings of the promise fulfilled. It taught men to know sin, that they might avoid it, and work holiness; repent and receive the kingdom; that that they who were without understanding, working wickedness, might be without excuse. And by increasing of transgressions it acted as a schoolmaster, humbling high hearts with the

knowledge of the impossibility of keeping it, teaching them that that which could not be kept must be powerless to save. It was a ministration of condemnation: by its glory, which was to be done away, it was to point out how much the ministration of righteousness, justification, acquittal, should exceed in glory.

The promise, moreover, was superior to the law, in that it was given by God to Abraham Himself, while the law was given by angels in the hand of a mediator. Moses was the mediator between God and the people in the giving of the law. But the promise was spoken by God to Abraham face to face. It was then in itself a more glorious gift than the law, in that it brought man nearer to God. And as in the giving, so also in the fulfilment. In the law the priest offered the sacrifices, and prayed for the people, and went in once a year into the Holy of Holies, to propitiate God for the people, and for himself, by the blood of the sacrifice. But in the Gospel, in the salvation which is by promise, the mediator is both God and Man, united in one Christ; and we, as members of His body, have access unto the Father, and have the knowledge of Him now, indeed, as through a glass darkly, but soon face to face. The Father Him-

self loveth us. We have no need to seek any other mediator ; for if we have put on Christ, He takes us into the presence of God, having once for all made eternal satisfaction for us, having by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

The salvation that is by the promise is thus more glorious than the fulfilling of the law. But the law is not opposed to the promise of God.

It is God's law, and bears the impress of His hand, in its fulness, breadth, and beauty. But as He ordained it for a single purpose, which was fulfilled in the fulfilment of the promise, there was no need for it to be continued as a matter of obligation. All that was in it which need be kept by the faithful under the Gospel, was taught us by Jesus Christ. He taught how the law might be kept, not according to the tradition of the elders, but as the law of God, who is a Spirit, should be kept, in spirit and in truth. He taught that the evil wish is sin, and not the evil deed only ; that we must, in judging ourselves, use all the strictness of justice ; in viewing the characters of our brethren, all the breadth of mercy. He bids us judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord ; and to judge not others, as neither did He, that we be not judged.

This keeping of the law was not in the tradition of the Pharisees, but in the Spirit which giveth life.

Add to these things, that the law was but for a time, until the seed should come, while the promise is in Christ Jesus, yea and amen, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; that the law was to a single nation, favoured indeed beyond the rest of the world by God's presence, and the knowledge of Him in the midst of darkness, and the sense of His care, but still pre-eminent in sin, as well as in privileges; as wicked in rejecting the promise, as it was favoured in witnessing its first fulfilment; while the promise is to all that are afar off, to every living man,—barbarian, Scythian, bond or free,—to all whom God should call, who should become Abraham's seed by faith, God's children in baptism, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Let us bless God, then, for giving the law to bring men to Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster, for ye are all the children of God in Christ Jesus.

These things, beloved, are not without a practical importance to us: the Church would not have bid us read them to-day if it were so.

We learn, first of all, to be thankful to God for

not putting upon us a law which it would have been impossible for us to keep. But we must remember, that though not under the law, we are under grace; our liberty is not licence. Grace is to them to whom it is given as authoritative in its conditions as the law of Moses was to the children of Israel. It requires holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; and if we are without that, the being under grace, the free gift of grace, will profit us nothing. Grace that is hindered from working holiness dies away. Grace involves working; the keeping of Christ's commandment is due to love, no less than that of the law was to fear: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." We, under grace, are sons, not servants; the more need to keep the commands of our Father.

The promise is ours; ours in Christ Jesus, ours as being by faith and holiness the children of Abraham; but if we are not such, if we put off Christ by sinning, if we lose the sonship by lack of love, and faith, and holiness,—if we cease to be Abraham's children, God's seed, in fact,—then we must cease to be inheritors of the promise; we shall have lost—thank God it shall not be so for any till death and judgment are over—our part in the dispensation of glory.

And yet the yoke of Christ is easy, and His

burden light. It is so but because He gives strength to wear the yoke, and bear the burden. To the ungodly it is not so. To those who have no grace from Him, His yoke seems heavy, and His burden grievous to be borne; and so it would be without His help. He requires much, but the help He gives to do it will make it easy; let your will work with His. If it does not, it is no use to talk of taking His service. If the proud will, the stubborn heart, cannot be made lowly, broken, contrite, then God will not accept the offering, even if pride will suffer one to be made. The works of the Spirit are entirely opposed to the works of the flesh; the works of the Spirit are a law to us. We have the law of the following of Christ; we have the law of God, written not on tables of stone or in flames of fire, but in the heart softened by grace, written with the finger of God. We have the light of the Holy Ghost put into our hearts at our baptism. It is the law of the Spirit, which is to be a lantern unto our feet.

Where shall we learn that law? In the life of Jesus, in His holiness and purity, His love of man, His duty towards God, His full, free, abundant mercy, shewn to all that come to Him.

Where shall we learn that law? In the life of Jesus Christ. That great example is the perfect

law of liberty. He that beholdeth in it as in a glass the glory of the Lord, His perfect love, His perfect holiness, and continueth in the beholding, imitating what he can, following afar off, but still following, praying for clearer sight, striving for more energetic action, he shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. God is love, Christ is love, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." On His part, love fulfilled the law for us; love on our part must fulfil the law He gives us. "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" if we for love will do all we can, He for love will forgive all that we cannot do. Love to our neighbour will not be satisfied with working no ill to him, it will not be satisfied without working all good to him. Love is the character of all God's dealings with us, His dealings with us all through our life. Love should be the character of all our dealings with Him.

Where shall we learn that law? Is not this enough? Is not the lesson of His holiness and love one that all time is too short to suffice for? Even so; yet we have something else to learn, a daily lesson, one that He can teach us, but not by example. He had no sin, we have each our several self-chosen path of it; and we have each to learn our own bitterness, we have each our own

self to deny, and our own sins to repent of. What shall we do? We still turn to that bright glorious pattern. Though in Him there was no sin, though in Him temptation found nought to answer to its allurements, still He can feel for us, and send forth strength for us, and He will stablish that which He has wrought in us. We will hold fast the hand He stretches out to us. We will hold fast what we have, that none take our crown. Even for us, poor, weak, penitent, there is a crown of promise! Oh when we look to that, to Jesus holding it ready for us when we have ended our race, do not our hearts burn to cast aside every weight? Why then does the intolerable burden of what we hate cling to us still? Alas, we have not thoroughly learned our task of sorrow. Who ever did? Who ever shall? Still I will lift up mine eyes unto Him,—whither else!

He gives rest to the weary and heavy-laden. He will do so for us. The burden of sin will be cast away at the word of His forgiveness. He will give us all things. He will not fail His promise. He will give us grace to live as children of the promise.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED.

JEREM. xii. 1. *Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee,—yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments:—Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?*

You are aware that when the Almighty was about to visit His people for their sins, He sent His prophets to warn them of the coming danger. Jeremiah,—(whose prophecies, throughout much of July and August, were read in the Church as the first week-day lessons,)—was one of those prophets. Very terrible are his threats and his warnings; or rather, the warnings and the threats of Almighty God, which he was commissioned to deliver. Sometimes he took his stand in the streets of the city,—sometimes in the courts of the Lord's House,—sometimes in the gate of the

Temple ; but wherever he went, his message was still the same. It was a call to repentance and amendment of life. And be sure of *this*,—the words he delivered are set on eternal record in the Bible, and are proclaimed year after year in the Church of Christ, because those threats and those warnings apply just as much to the people of God now, as they did to the people of God *then*. ‘The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Stand in the gate of the Lord’s House, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.’ The prophet being dead, *yet* speaketh. The Lord liveth, and His message is still the same. A voice cries to us every time we enter this, our Temple,—every time we enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. The exhortation is still to ‘amend our ways, and our doings,’—lest the woe which befel Jerusalem should be dealt upon ourselves.

But that is not the precise matter on which we propose now to say a few words.—We wish you to observe that Jeremiah,—to whom our eyes have so lately been directed, and who, for this

week and the next, supplies us with the first of our Sunday Lessons,—in the midst of his heavy task,—denouncing woe, threatening punishment, detecting sin, describing the affliction which was coming on his fellow-countrymen,—this prophet, I say, seems to have been struck with that which has, many a time, struck every one of ourselves : namely,—*the prosperity of the wicked*. Jeremiah seems to have been amazed at what he saw in Jerusalem. Before his prophetic eye passed the coming woe ; and so grievous was it and terrible, that he cried out in an agony, “ Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people ! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men ; that I might leave my people and go from them ! ” Day after day, he was commissioned by God to go and stand,—now in the street,—now in the Temple,—now in the market place,—now in the field : and repentance was still his prayer,—the sinfulness of the people was still his theme—the anger of God was still his message. Yet what did he see before him ? The people still persevering in their evil ways : the cheating and the adultery, the swearing and drinking, the undutifulness to

parents, and the disregard of the Sabbath,—still going on unabated; the sun still shining down upon the city, bright and warm as ever; and all nature looking as gay, as if Heaven and Earth were friends. . . . Crowds of well-dressed people gadding to and fro, while *he* stood clothed in sackcloth!—thousands feasting, while *he* fasted!—tens of thousands revelling, while *he* poured forth, by God's commandment, his dreary message of fire, and dearth, and captivity to come! . . . All this seemed to him passing strange; and at last the thought of his heart found vent in complaint. Very humbly we imagine him making it, but very earnestly, as if in expostulation with the great God of Heaven; and these were the words he spoke. “Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee,—yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments:—Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?”

And so, probably, we all have asked, many a time. The thing is too hard for us. If God be so angry with sin, why does He suffer it to exist? If adultery is horrible in His sight, why does He not strike the guilty ones dead at once? If drunkenness and swearing are crimes before Him, why does the drunkard and profane speaker ever attain to the age of three-score

and ten? If dishonesty is an abominable thing, deserving heavy punishment, how does it happen that dishonest men sometimes grow rich and seem very prosperous? "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee,—yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments:—Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?"

Now we cannot pretend to point out *all* the reasons, but we can point out some:—and they are such as these.

1. First, a sin may go unpunished for days, weeks, months, or years, in order that men may have time for *repentance*. If all sin deserves punishment, and the wages of sin is *death*,—do but think what the fate of the world would be, if the thief dropped to the earth while he did the deed, and was found in the morning, stiff and cold, with the thing he was stealing in his hand!—if the adulterer and adulteress were to be cut off, like Zimri and Cozbi, in the midst of their crime!—if the drunkard expired while he was draining the cup!—and profane speakers fell speechless to the earth, like Ananias and Sapphira of old, with an oath or a lie on their lip! . . . Why, if that were the case, there are *some* places of public resort, *some* profane assemblies, where the fate of the crowd would be like the

fate of Sennacherib's army :—‘ When they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses !’

2. Another reason why God suffers sin to go unpunished for a time, may be,—because He is thereby enabled to prove the constancy of His own people. “ The ungodly,” says the Psalmist, “ is a sword of Thine.” Thus Herod’s lust enabled the Baptist to prove *his* inflexibility :—and the sinfulness of Potiphar’s wife was that which made Joseph’s chastity shine out like silver in the furnace. Pharaoh’s cruelty exercised the faith of Moses ; and Balaam’s deceit proved who were obedient in Israel. It is ever thus. God overrules everything for good. The very fierceness of man turns to His praise. Unkind words give an opportunity for gentle answers ; and injury opens the door that forgiveness may enter. Scenes of temptation shew what is in the heart of a man ; while the day of trial ascertains whether he is built upon a rock, or upon the sand.

3. We will only mention one reason more, and that shall be a very important one : namely, this ; —that if sin were punished immediately, then, virtue ought to be rewarded immediately : and the consequence of this would be, that there would be no room for faith. If, for example, the

dishonest always grew poor, and the honest immediately began to grow rich;—if theft were *always* detected, drunkenness *always* followed by sudden death, lust *always* stopped midway by the sword of Divine vengeance:—we should see no more dishonesty, no more theft, no more drunkenness, no more adultery,—of course. But how would the end of our creation *then* be answered? Where would be the walk of Faith? Where the merit of obedience? Where the love of God shed abroad in our hearts? Where the day of Judgment? Where Heaven and Hell?

Some one perhaps will demur at this. ‘Would it not be a good thing,’ (he will say,)—‘a better thing at least,—that an example should be made of some people, that all the rest might be saved? Would it not be better for this dreadfully severe code of laws to exist, if (as you say) we should see no more dishonesty, theft, drunkenness, adultery?’

We will answer this question by shewing its absurdity — or rather the impossibility of the course proposed. Certainly, if every dishonest man were to drop down dead at your feet, you would never commit a dishonest action. You would be afraid: and the prospect of an untimely end would effectually hold every one back

from the commission of actual theft. But what says the Scripture?—‘Thou shalt not covet.’ Here, you see, is a sin of the heart. ‘Thou shalt not look—to lust.’ Here, you see, is a sin of the eye Come now. What think’ you of your proposed severity? Would it be better for this dreadfully severe code of laws against sin to come into operation What! shall my friend faint by my side, and a covetous wish have done it?—Shall the young man be cut off in his strength, and a lustful thought have slain him?—Shall a conversation end, by the two speakers falling dead—one upon the other—because angry thoughts, arising in their minds, had been found exceeding sinful in the eyes of the faithful witness? You see, brethren, the scheme of instantaneous punishment as a warning against sin, is either impossible, or it would be attended with consequences so tremendous—it would in fact, be so deadly in its operation,—that the proposed remedy would be a thousand times worse than the disease.

We repeat, therefore, that God withholds His hand — puts it forth only occasionally — that men may have their Faith exercised thereby: in other words, they do not *see* the punishment, in order that they may be compelled to *believe* it.

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!”

And yet we must all have observed, that though punishment in this world does not *always* follow sin, yet it does *sometimes*. The thief *is* caught sometimes. The murderer *is* punished *sometimes*. The drunkard *does* grow a miserable idiot, feeble both in mind and body *sometimes*; or dies before his time; or is a ruined man. And there are a great many cases on record of gains, got dishonestly, which have been the ruin of those who got them. ‘He that buildeth his house with other men’s money,’ (says the author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus,) ‘is like one that gathereth himself stones for the tomb of his burial.’ . . . Sooner or later, our sins find us out, even in this world. “Be sure your sin will find you out,” said Moses, the man of God It may not be just yet. All may go very prosperously with you to-day: but wait a little. Wait for a year or two. Wait till you grow old. Wait till the end. The reason why you must wait, is because you have to do with God, and not man. If you had to do with man, your fate would be settled in a moment. But God’s ways are not man’s ways — ‘neither are My thoughts like your thoughts, saith the Lord.’

A very important thing remains still unsaid, which must now be stated.

Jeremiah's question was addressed to Almighty God. "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee,—yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments:—Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?"—The prophet spoke in amaze. The wonder of the sight overcame him. Doubtless, when he came to himself, the reasons already given, and a great many more, must have occurred. He was a holy and a wise man. He looked up to God in his difficulty, thought of God: and the thought of God makes most difficulties plain. For 'God is Light;' and the darkness of our understanding is scattered, when we refer our doubts to Him.

But when the sight which perplexed the prophet, strikes ourselves,—it may well be questioned whether we habitually look up to Heaven, and ask 'How can these things be?'... Let us ask ourselves, brethren, whether we do not return a different answer from any one of the three which have gone before; whether we do not account for the strangeness of the sight on a very different principle. We should not dare to state so monstrous a thing openly; but we may, nevertheless, secretly fancy, that the reason why sin goes un-

punished—why “the way of the wicked prospers”—is either because God does not *attend* to what we are doing; or, if He does, that He does not really *care* quite so much about it, as He says in the Bible that He does. He has indeed declared by the Psalmist that “the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good:” that “there is not a thought in our hearts, but He knoweth it altogether:” that “the darkness and the light to Him are both alike:”—but though we admit this with our lips, we do not thoroughly believe it with our hearts Again, He says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die:” but then we think that He can hardly mean it. He says, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the people who forget God:” but we still hesitate. He says, “They who have done evil shall go into Hell fire, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched:” but we cannot really think so. He says, “The wages of sin is death;” but we cannot suppose that everlasting burnings will ever be *our* portion And *why* cannot we? *Why* do we secretly fancy that none of these terrors will really be the penalty, in the end? Surely the reason is this. It is because all things go on from day to day, so smoothly and quietly. Just as smoothly, just as

quietly, does the course of the world proceed, let our actions be as wicked as they may, as if we were leading the life of saints; serving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength! We see no change in anything. The sun shines as warmly upon *us* as upon our neighbours. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Meat and drink nourish us by day: sleep overcomes us at night: our neighbours accost us kindly in the morning:—and all this goes on exactly as regularly in the case of the sinner as in the case of the saint. And so, by degrees, we forget the matter for which our conscience once smote us. Meantime, we flatter ourselves that God is such an one as we are: sees as dimly—overlooks—misses—forgets. . . . O what a dreadful mistake we are guilty of, while we thus reason concerning Him whose eyes are in every place—who forgets nothing—who will call us to account for every idle word—who will bring to light the very secret thoughts of our heart!

The reason, then, why we find it so hard to believe that God is displeased with the wicked—that His arm is ever lifted up, His bow ever drawn against them—is because the way of the

wicked prospers. By prosperity, it is not exactly meant that they grow very rich, or that they fare particularly well, (though *this* sometimes happens, and adds a great deal to the difficulty, doubtless). It is rather meant, that no evil overtakes them, that they go on from day to day as easily and comfortably as other men who are leading holy lives; perhaps more comfortably, more easily. This is what is commonly meant by their "prospering." And we have been considering the prophet Jeremiah's question: "*Why* doth the way of the wicked prosper?"

The answer we have got to this question has been,—First, in order that they may thereby have *time and opportunity for repentance*. Next, in order that God may *use them to try the constancy of the more virtuous and holy of His people*. Thirdly, in order that God may *exercise thereby the faith of His Church*. This last is so important a head, that we desire to say a few words more about it.

For truly, it *does* require a large amount of faith to look upon what we see around us,—and neither to grow faint and weary, on the one hand, nor to disbelieve, and distrust God, on the other. But let us never faint; never grow unbelieving. Let us do as the shepherd does on dark nights

upon the downs,—as the sailor does on dark nights at sea,—where there is no pathway and nothing below to guide them:—let us fix our eyes on Heaven.

We will, at such times, look up to Him who is above all. We will remember His unchanging threats. We will feed upon His everlasting promises. We will tremble at His clear warnings. We will rejoice in His bright encouragements. We will build all our hopes,—and lean all our weight,—yea, and lay all our burthen,—upon *Him*. If ever the weakness of the flesh makes what we see going on around, almost too much for us; the prosperity of the wicked—the affliction of the just—too great a puzzle; so that we grow impatient of the sight at last; and like Hagar with her child in the wilderness, could almost lay down our hope; and, for ourselves, desire that we might die:—I say, should this ever be our condition, we will remember that “men ought always to pray and not to faint.” And thus, or somewhat thus, we will reason with ourselves:—

“The sight before me is a strange one: but there must be a reason for the thing I see, though I cannot altogether discern it. Of *one* thing, at least, I am certain; namely, that the prosperity

of the wicked is no proof of the indifference of God. It does not follow that God does not care for what men do, because He suffers them to do it. No! If ever, for a moment, I have been inclined to think so, I will—as I value my immortal soul—think so no more. He stands by; pleads; watches; yea, weeps:—yet He makes no sign of His presence. He waits long and patiently—but He comes at last: and when He does come, He is like a consuming fire!—I remember that He bore long with Jerusalem; yea, silently wept over it, at last: but at the end of forty years, He sent a fierce army, and burnt up the city! Shall I, then, despise the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, as if I did not know that the goodness of God is meant to lead men to repentance?

“No, I will not be so faithless, so worldly, so blind. ‘I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help:’ for I know that the first peep of the morning will be discernible there! I cannot see clearly, and I do not know my way, and I am not familiar with the things about me: but when the morning begins to brighten, all things will become very plain. Till then, my soul! have patience; and be thou, my rebellious heart! at peace. Do Thou,

O Lord, deal gently with Thy servant likewise, —nor try him beyond what he is able to bear : but give him secret consolations, and sustain him with unforeseen encouragements ; and above all, let Thy Kingdom quickly come ; and when the shadows have melted away, and all things, with the reason of them, shall stand out bright and clear in the sunshine of the eternal morning, —suffer me then, throughout the ages, to behold the beauty of Thy face, and evermore to gather brightness from Thy glory !”

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

RELIANCE ON FORMS.

GAL. vi. 15. *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

WITH these words, the apostle warns the Galatians of the nothingness of the Jewish rite of circumcision. By the bringing in of a better covenant through Christ, the ancient covenant with Abraham had been done away for ever. Henceforth, 'neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.' And such a new creature does man become through the new birth in Holy Baptism,—which, in the words of the Catechism, is 'a death unto Sin and a new birth unto righteousness.'

The words before us, however, have a yet broader teaching than this. It may well be thought that one reason why the admonition of the text finds place in God's written word was in order to convey a constant warning to believers of every age against reliance on external ordinances,

to the neglect of inward holiness. And this is the line of thought to which we propose now to guide your attention. You are aware that the ancient people of God not only boasted of their privileges, but relied on them also. They relied on being children of Abraham,—forgetting that God could, if He chose, “of these stones” (as the Baptist said), “raise up children to Abraham.” They relied on circumcision—forgetting that their Father Abraham, when he found favour with God, and was called by Him, was in a state of *uncircumcision*; and that he pleased God, not because he had circumcision, but because he had faith. So that, in fact, as many as have faith are the true Israelites—the real children of faithful Abraham.—And all this is expressed by St. Paul in a few words when he says, in the words of the text, ‘Neither circumcision avail-eth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.’ For the Galatian converts, notwithstanding the earnestness and skill of the great apostle, declined, in his absence, to Judaism; and are addressed almost as if they were Jews.

Here then is a great lesson, unmistakeably laid down. The Jews were warned against relying on their privileges; and the warning is handed down to ourselves, in order to convey the same

message to Christians to the end of time. The Holy Spirit, speaking to us by the same apostle, warns *us*, just as gravely, against the great danger—the risk equally run by Christians and by Jews alike—of reposing in our privileges, and depending for Salvation on outward ordinances, of any kind whatever.

We are not, of course, putting the Jewish Sacraments on a level with the Christian; any more than St. Paul can be supposed to have done in the beginning of the tenth chapter of his first Epistle of the Corinthians. By no means. The first were merely *signs* of grace: the latter (the Christian Sacraments) are, as all men know, much more than signs. They are the *means* whereby grace is actually conveyed. But this does not affect the question at all. We desire on this occasion simply to remind you of the utter hollowness of a religion which *relies* upon forms—the great danger of putting our *reliance* for eternal Salvation on any outward ordinances whatsoever.

Now, this is a matter on which we desire to be understood quite clearly. There must be no mistake here. We are not saying that any ordinance of our religion is a form *only*. Nor do we say that there is any danger of our thinking too highly of the Church or her ordinances. Very

far from it. Least of all are we asserting that we can over-estimate the two Sacraments of the Church. It is, on the contrary, quite impossible to esteem the benefit derived from them highly enough. But it may be very possible to over-estimate *our interest in them*: to fancy that they are doing, or will hereafter do, something for us, which the life we are leading altogether prevents and renders impossible. We earnestly ask for your attention, while we endeavour to put this clearly before you.

For surely, brethren, there are many men, who, without any distinct notion of the value of the two Sacraments, of the sacred ordinances of the Church, of the very Gospel itself—yet shew, in a hundred ways, that they repose on outward conformity to these; and build their hopes of acceptance with God on a formal compliance with His requirements. Just consider: what is most men's religion, but a coming to church on Sunday, a few prayers repeated morning and evening, and a chapter in the Bible sometimes read? Add to this, a bringing of their children to Holy Baptism, and an occasional presenting of themselves at the Lord's Table for Holy Communion,—and what remains? Nothing perhaps. We allow that this may be much; but you will also allow that

it *may* be very little indeed. Surely, to come to church is not to be religious! It is a mere habit with many; and it is a reputable practice. One may even say that there is a kind of social pleasure, to all except the very wicked, in coming to church: and this pleasure may have nothing to do with religion. Again, to say a few prayers before leaving one's chamber, and to repeat them over again before going to rest at night; *this* also is not, surely, to be religious! It is (once more) with many, a mere habit; and it brings a kind of calm with it, for the sake of which open and monstrous sinners will often repeat their prayers.—So again, to read the Bible is not of necessity a religious act. One may read carelessly, or one may read hastily: one may read as a task, or as a duty. Or one may read slowly and carefully, and yet not devotionally; for a man may read in order to find excuse for himself, or even as an unbeliever. Thus the Bible, as many read it, is no more than a common book. To some it is, doubtless, the power of God unto salvation: but to how many is it merely a grave book of antiquated histories, impracticable precepts, and difficult texts! Lastly, children may be brought to Holy Baptism, not in faith, but because it is customary to bring

them : and parents may receive the Holy Eucharist, not with vows of amendment and sorrow for past sin ; not in earnest, hearty, perfect faith : but because the rubric requires it, and because their neighbours do it, and because they are ashamed to stay away.

True enough it is, that if you were to speak to such an one as we have been describing, and tax him with reliance on forms, he would deny it. And in a certain sense, he would be right. He does not perhaps rely on forms ; but he relies on *something outward*, call it what you will. He goes through a round of outward acts ; and whatever name you give to the feeling with which he regards his performance of them, it matters little. He is contented to be what he is : he is contented to do what he does. He thinks he may rely upon it. *That* is the sense in which we say he relies upon forms. But he is in fact relying upon what will be found vain and worthless as “ wood, hay, stubble,” in the great and terrible day when every man’s work shall be proved as by fire.

Nay, take the better class of men, and tell them they rely on forms, and you will hear them deny it. “ We do not trust to win Heaven,” they will say, “ for any work of our own,

nor for any system we belong to." No—we answer ; neither for your work, nor yet for your faith, nor for any thing else that is yours, we trust, do you hope to go to Heaven. Eternal peace and joy, the blessedness of the saints, is the free gift of God ; unbought, unearned, undeserved. But we did not mean, when we said that you relied on forms, to tax you with grounding your title to Heaven on any merit of your own. No, what we meant was something different from *that* ; and we proceed at once to explain it.

All persons who know anything of Christian religion, know that God is the Author of forms,—and that upon the due performance of them we may rely on Him for the certain bestowal of all those graces which He has covenanted in and by them to bestow. Thus Prayer is a form, and coming to Church is a form, and reading the Bible is a form. Baptism is a form, and Confirmation is a form, and the Lord's Supper is a form. And are we to be in any doubt whether it is lawful for us to rely on obtaining grace by these ? God forbid ! What then becomes of our warning ? We have need to be very careful *how* we rely on all these wondrous means of grace. For take them one by one. Prayer, public and private, should be the

lifting up of the heart and soul to God, who has promised to be found of those that seek Him. To pray, is to draw down supplies of God's Holy Spirit; for our guidance, comfort, help, protection. But we may say our prayers, and yet not pray! Baptism is the beginning of spiritual Life; but it is no more. Infants indeed, dying baptized, are surely saved; but not surely saved if they survive for a few years, and become capable of the commission of actual sin. Regeneration does indeed take place, with them, inevitably, invariably, in Holy Baptism: but is any one so mad as to suppose that this is of necessity followed by holiness of life? No! we require daily renewal—daily to be renewed by God's Holy Spirit, as the Collect for Christmas Day faithfully reminds us. And this last is a great truth of which we cannot but think that men are often unmindful; or we should hear less of bitter controversy on the subject of Baptismal grace. Now, we require daily renewal, for the health—for the very *life* of our souls. But what if we do not seek this in and by the means of God's own appointment? Or, what if we avail ourselves of the means—come to the great source of spiritual renewal, at yonder Holy Table, distracted, unloving, impure, im-

penitent? . . . You see then, brethren, what we mean.—The form is Divine. It may be therefore relied on. But the command, and the requirement, is spiritual; and unless we bring to the form that which God requires on our part,—whereon are we building our hope of a blessing from it? . . . ‘He is not a Jew’, says St. Paul, (neither is he a Christian,) ‘which is one *outwardly*.’ Nay, our danger increases with our privileges: our risk becomes the more imminent, as the prize we contend for is the more momentous.

And this shall suffice. Let us not, as we value our souls, despise forms! They are either channels of grace (as prayer is): or they are signs of things past telling sacred (such is Holy Matrimony): or they sanctify (Consecration does, for example): or they solemnize (Christian Burial, for instance). They are always precious. The least of them is unspeakably dear to the Christian’s heart. The greatest of them—does it not lead us to the very open gate of Heaven? . . . For your souls’ sake, then, despise not forms! But oh, beware of the danger of mistaking the outward ceremony for the inward privilege—yielding up the body, but keeping back the heart—*relying* on the *form*—instead of, through the form, feeling after Him who gave the form, and ordained it expressly that

He might be apprehended in, and through, and by it! . . . O beware of the danger, the awful danger, through some fault of your own, of kneeling down before thy Lord, yet not praying to Him; reading His Word, yet not knowing more of Him: coming to His House, yet not thinking of Him: drawing near to His Holy Table, where He is most surely to be found, and yet failing to be made a partaker of Him!

Remember at all times, that as your nature is twofold, so is your life twofold also. We all lead two lives,—an outer and an inner. It must be so from the very constitution of our nature. God has willed it. Let our struggle only be to make the outer and the inner life correspond. When the knees are bowed down before God, then let the heart be prostrated before Him also: when the eye is busied on the Book of Life, then let the mind be altogether there: when the foot treads the pathway which leads to God's House, then let the desires, and the thoughts, and the affections all move with it: when the hand is reached out for the Bread and the Cup, then let the soul feel after God as well,—hunger and thirst after *Him* who alone is a satisfying portion: that extended hand, a true outward symbol of the real inward need.

And let your religion, brethren, be a course of holy living: active, practical, self-denying. Be convinced that you have *prayed indeed*, by finding yourselves armed against temptation. Be convinced that you have been *for some purpose* to God's House, by returning more contented, more loving, more peaceable, more full of good resolutions, to your home! Prove that you have faith in Christ, by constant works of love. Prove that you have been worthy communicants by refusing to have any thing to do with wilful sin. Shew that you have a sincere love for God by doing all that in you lies to promote His glory—the honour of His Sanctuary—the rest of His Sabbath. Distrust every thing in yourselves but one. *That one thing* regard with humble joy, if you please; but that one thing only. We mean,—the resistance which, by God's grace, you are enabled to offer to temptation—the advances you make in holiness—the progress you make in subduing your own besetting sin. True enough it is, that forms—outward ordinances and visible forms—are the means which Christ Himself hath appointed towards this blessed end. But O (once more) beware of relying upon them for a benefit which their Divine Author has nowhere promised that they should convey. They

are but the scaffold by which the building is to be raised—the ladder by which the wall is to be surmounted. They are *instruments* of Salvation, but instruments *only*. The great work of sanctification must be keeping pace, and going on *within*, all the while: its progress really and truly known only to Him who searches the heart, and weighs and measures all things perfectly—known in a degree to yourselves, as you grow in grace and feel your strength increase—seen, it may be, by a few who are near enough to you to perceive the real improvement which is going on within you.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

EPH. iii. 17—19. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

ONE of our common sayings tells us that the more closely we become acquainted with anything, the less wonder and admiration we feel towards it. Yet surely this is not always true, even as regards things of earth. For instance, a great traveller thus expresses his wonder at the size of the continent of South America : “I had often,” he says, “in years gone by, looked at this part of the world upon a map ; and being there given on a different scale from the rest, it seemed to be about the size of any ordinary country ; but when I came to sail for

days and days with a fair wind along its shores, and had only accomplished a distance which upon the map seemed a little speck, then I began to form some idea of the vast extent of the whole continent, and could in some degree imagine how great the whole length of its shores must be, when so small a portion of them had taken us so long a time in a fast vessel, and at so great a speed of sailing."

And as it is with lands, so it is with some buildings; you must all have heard of the pyramids of Egypt; those wondrous piles of brick, and earth, and stone, whose builders were unknown two thousand years ago; and now they stand, as then they stood, the wonder and the mystery of the world; wonderful for their antiquity, but still more wonderful for their immense size, and for the amount of labour which must have been bestowed upon them; and accordingly men of all nations and languages come from afar to behold these mountains which the hand of man has reared: but when travellers first see them they are disappointed, and they wonder more at the fame the pyramids have gained than at the pyramids themselves. The reason of their disappointment is that the pyramids are set in a wide plain of barren sand, and therefore no

houses or trees are near by which the eye can measure them so as to at all take in their real size : but, though disappointed, men do not at once depart ; they go round each pyramid, look from one to the other, dwell some hours beneath their shade, attempt perhaps to climb up to some stone which seems the largest one in the few first courses, and looks as if it were close to them : and then, by the time they have done all this, the true greatness of the scene grows upon them ; they are astonished that these huge piles ever appeared to them so small ; a kind of awe overpowers them ; and in the after years of their life these travellers look back to their visit to the pyramids of Egypt as one of the chief events of their lives ; it is a sight to which, amidst the busy turmoil of life, they turn back for calmness and repose.

Once more, to come nearer to ourselves : who has not seen a child look out through a window, and stretch forth its arms and open its little hands, as though it would have the moon placed in them ?—for to the child the moon in the sky seems small and close at hand. And then we grow a little older ; we look upon the sun and the stars ; we would fain climb the hill-top in order to reach the stars ; we walk towards

the south in order to come nearer to the sun and feel more of his heat. But when we become men we put away these childish thoughts; we learn, that though we should fly through the air day and night continually, as fast as the swiftest of the birds, we should scarce reach the sun in twice the longest life of man. Then we begin to have some idea of the distance of those heavenly bodies which once seemed so near to us, and we in some degree conceive the real size of the sun, and the moon, and the stars, which once we thought to be no larger than ourselves: and yet, when men study the stars more carefully than we have done or can do, when they have spent years and years of hard work in trying to find out the distance of the nearest of the fixed stars, then they confess that their labour is vanity; for the mind of man cannot grasp or conceive numbers so large as would be required to express it.

Thus then, though many things of daily life seem great at first, but grow less and less in our eyes as we become more familiar with them; yet, on the other hand, there are things whose exceeding vastness and immensity leads us at first to pass them by, and to think little of them; but if we have patience to weigh, and to

ponder, and to examine them, their real grandeur and dignity by degrees dawns upon us, until at length a flood of daylight fills our souls, and we reap a full reward for all our toil and trouble, in the harvest of noble thoughts which such sights raise within us.

Now, brethren, does this hold good only with regard to things of earth, and to the senses and powers of the natural man? Does the continent spread out before us by degrees only into its full length and breadth? does the pyramid slowly reach to its full height in our mind's eye? does it take years for man to learn the full height of the skies above, and the depth of the earth beneath? and *then* is all else, all that is spiritual, all that is of God, easy to be known? Can the eye of faith at one glance discern the full height and depth of spiritual mysteries? the believing soul by one effort grasp all that can be known about the true Light? Can we in an instant survey the whole length and breadth of the country of our inheritance, of that better land which is very far off, where the King dwelleth in His glory? It cannot be. Yet, must it not be confessed that in our practice, if not in our words, we are wont to say that it is so? Do not most of us think that we already know enough about

religion, and about "God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind?" What is the reason we read God's own Word so little, and give so little diligence and pains to understand what we read; while we are ready enough to read and to study any new book? Is it not because we have read the Bible and heard it read all our life long, and therefore we fancy that we know these things already? We confess that we do not act up to our knowledge; we allow that we do not perform all that we ought, as Christians, to do; and that we are not so thankful as we should be for the love and goodness which has been shewn towards us: but yet which of us would endure to have it said of him, "that he does not know what God has done for him, what love Christ has shewn towards him?" Would not any of you, if thus accused, make answer, "I *do* know it all: I have read the Bible ever since I was a child; I say the Creeds; and I know and rejoice that Jesus Christ became man, being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary: and I confess that it was for me and for my salvation that He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, and thence sent the Holy Ghost to be with His peo-

ple for evermore. Surely, then, I at least *know* the greatness of the love of Christ, though, it may be, I do not return it as I ought by loving Him who so loved me." But though this would be a ready answer in most men's mouths, would it be sufficient? "True," might one reply, "you do know the outward acts by which that love was shewn; you repeat them all correctly, and no doubt believe them all; but do you *therefore* know the inward power of that love?"

Surely, if a belief of the outward acts of Christ is all that is required in order to a saving knowledge of His love, then things of earth are more wonderful than things of heaven; the works of man are of more account than the works of God, who made him and gave to him his power; the creature is higher and nobler than the Creator. For, must it not be so, if we can thus easily and in a moment fully understand the love of Christ? If time and care and much thought must be bestowed upon things of earth before their greatness is felt and understood, can it be quite easy to know all about Christ's love? can we grasp that without any trouble? are we sure to comprehend His love toward us and all mankind, through the mere length of time that we have been Christians, without labour, or thought, or

care, on our part? Brethren, the apostle Paul speaks a very different language in this day's epistle: he does not take it for granted that every one who professes and calls himself a Christian has fathomed the depth and measured the height of the Saviour's love; no! the sum of St. Paul's prayer for the Christians of Ephesus, for those whom he had addressed as saints, for those who had held the faith of Christ for years, his prayer for them is "that they may know the love of Christ." And yet he prays not that even they might know the whole of it; but that they might attain to that knowledge of it which man can reach here below, in order that they might be able to see how far it stretched away, above and beneath, and on every side of them; for "it is a love which passeth all knowledge."

It is for this end that St. Paul asks all other gifts for the Ephesians. He prays that, according to the riches of God's glory, "they may be strengthened by the spirit in the inner man;" he prays "that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith," and "that they may be rooted and grounded in love," for the very purpose that, possessing these gifts, they may then "be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know that love

of Christ which passeth knowledge." Those other gifts and graces of the Spirit, which we might have regarded as the choice jewels of the Christian treasury, are here only laid as stepping-stones to the knowledge of "the love of Christ;" because it is only when we truly know the love of Christ towards us, that we can be "filled unto all the fulness of God," i. e. we shall then, and then only, be fashioned after that mould which God has appointed for us; God's purposes of mercy will be fully accomplished in us, and we shall be His for ever.

Whosoever then among you is conscious that though he has striven much, he still falls very far short of being such as God would have him to be; whosoever cometh short of good resolutions, and mourns over his short-comings; to you is this word of comfort sent: "Seek ye to know more and more the love of Jesus Christ towards you, then shall ye be taught of the Spirit; and so shall ye be filled and perfected unto the fulness of God." This is the way the apostles of Christ taught, and we His ministers can tell of none other.

Be careful, however, brethren, that ye seek to know Christ's love as it is in truth; you may not fondly dream about some love of Christ, unre-

vealed in holy Scripture, which shall in some strange way save you, while you go on wilfully in your own careless ways ; the love of Christ of which St. Paul had heard, and which he preached, was a love which would deliver men from the power of sin now, as well as from the punishment of sin hereafter ; a love which would take men out of the dark dungeon, in order that they might walk in the true light ; and would strike off their fetters, that they might run the way of God's commandments, when their hearts were set at liberty.

But when we have found Christ's true love, and follow not vain shadows, how shall we learn its greatness ? Even in the same way that we seek after other knowledge : the first step is to know our own ignorance ; to feel quite sure that there is something to which we have not yet attained. The second step is to dwell much upon the thing we seek to know, to study it, to give up ourselves to it ; in one word, to be in it. Are not the apostle's instructions for our attaining to the knowledge of the love of Christ the same as those we follow in attaining other knowledge ? Is much thought necessary to those who would trace the course of the stars ? So also must " Christ dwell in our hearts by faith " be-

fore we can reach the perfect knowledge of His love; night and day our early and our latest thoughts must be of Him, even as when an earthly image has taken possession of our hearts, and dwells there: by faith we own the Crucified as our Lord and Saviour; by meditation we make a home for Him within us.

Must men coast along a country in order to know how far it reaches? So must we, "being mightily strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man," be borne along by His blessed influence, as by a favouring breeze, that we may survey the whole of our good land, both how great things Christ hath done for us, and how great are the blessings, both here and hereafter, which He has purchased for us. Once more; must men stand beneath the pyramid of Egypt, and climb its sides, if they would know its vastness? So does the apostle tell us that we must "be rooted and grounded in love" before we can attain to the full knowledge of the love of Christ. In confidence on His love, we begin to love Him, and then we know more of His love towards us. For, like trees planted by the water-side, let the roots of our hearts drink deep of His love to us, then shall we bear fruit upwards in love towards Him. Let His love be as the firm

ground beneath our feet, and then, while we climb, we shall be enabled to see yet greater heights of His love above us, and as we mount upwards we shall yet again look back and trace the greatness of His love which hath thus far supported our feet, and brought us on our way in safety.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

HUMILITY.

LUKE xiv. 11. *For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

THE frequency with which, in the Bible, we are exhorted to humility, is very remarkable. St. Paul's precepts on the subject are most emphatic. "Put on," he says in one place, "humbleness of mind." Again, he says: "Walk with all lowliness." St. James repeats the same teaching: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord." St. Peter again, using almost the same words; "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;" and in still more striking language, as shewing how completely such a spirit should envelope and pervade our being: "*Be clothed with humility.*" The frequent repetition of this same exhortation is much to be observed.

Then again, observe what an exceeding value God puts upon this grace. When the prophet Micah teaches us that there are three things which God requireth, of these three, one is "to walk humbly with thy God." Again, God once delayed His vengeance upon the whole people of the Jews for this one cause only, because "Josiah's heart was tender, and did humble itself." Or, again, the value of this grace in God's sight may be judged of by the long pains which He takes to produce it in the soul. Consider how He kept His people in the wilderness forty years; and the reason is given: "God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee." Again, consider what God Himself submitted to endure, in order to teach by example this same precept; for with this special view the pattern of the life of Christ is enforced by St. Paul: "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant." Again, the same state of heart is set forth as the very condition of receiving all other blessings: "God resisteth the proud; but He giveth grace to the humble." And so in the text, our Lord declares, as an universal law, the sure ruin arising from the lack of such a grace, and the equally sure

blessedness of possessing it: "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

It is remarkable that so much should be said in the Scripture of the necessity, the value, and the difficulty of humility, when, for various reasons, it might well have been thought that man could not be otherwise than humble. Consider that we are creatures, dependent every moment on an act of mercy for our life; each single breath a work of providence; every faculty and sense a perpetual work of God. We might be blind, or deaf, or maimed, in a moment. There are dangers and there are wants around us at every turn. Each crumb of our daily bread is the Creator's gift; the creature would at once hunger and die, unless He open His hand and feed us. What the morrow may bring forth, who can say? what sorrow may brood over to-morrow's light, who can foresee? I have watched to see how the mother tends her babe, never leaving it, lest some sudden hazard jeopard its frail life. But is not the full-grown powerful man as helpless, unless God every moment supply his need?

Again, consider what state of mind seems most natural for a sinner. And here we may

leave out of the question the more flagrant transgressions of the law of God, and consider only our infirmities, ignorances, negligences, the faults of daily recurrence ; such as hastiness of speech, want of love to others, evil desires, quickly-rising passions, wrong motives, forgetfulness of God's presence. Even our daily life is a constant falling, and sorrowing over our falls, and the very good we do is ever mingled with evil ; and our very prayers, through irreverence, or inattention, or coldness, are quickly turned into sin. Consider this, and is there not enough here to keep us humble ?

And yet, marvellous as it appears, pride is one of the strongest, deepest roots of sin in our fallen nature. By this our first parents fell : they wished to be as God ; they would be higher in the scale of the creation ; they would sit down in the highest seats, and so they fell. This working of pride was manifested in the very midst of abundance ; when there was no want, no sorrow, when all around was beautiful, and pure, and full of joy. The satiety of bliss did not lessen the temptation to pride. But it may be supposed that this very abundance of bliss engendered pride. Yet we see it exist as strongly in the loss of all earthly things. When the

apostles arose and followed Christ, they had left all : they had left parents, home, possessions ; they had left their ships, and their nets. They had with them but a scrip, food and clothing only from day to day ; yet in them too we see pride working : “ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto Him saying, Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we desire ; and He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you ? They say unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left, in Thy glory.” Here was pride seeking the higher places, even when they had left all. There is pride in the heart when in the midst of abundance ; there is pride when all earthly goods are gone. In truth, it is not a thing of one station, or another. No change of circumstance removes it. It can neither be exhausted by the fulness of gratification and overflowing honours, nor can it be depressed by desolation and deepest penury.

Yet pride will not shew itself alike in all, though it exist in all. It may be seen in an overbearing manner, a haughty spirit, a fiery eye, or a vain dress. When such outward manifestations are not perceived, it may be supposed that pride does not exist. But it may live as

strongly in the secret desires of the heart, in longings which find no voice or expression; in wounded feelings and disappointed hopes, which have no outward sign.

It becomes, moreover, the more difficult to detect the working of pride, because it will often cloak itself under false names. Even as the very spirit of evil can array himself as an angel of light, so can this deepest sin of our fallen hearts disguise itself in a plausible garb, and so deceive us. Thus we speak of honour; and for the sake of honour nations have been involved in deadliest wars, and murderous duels fought in cold blood; and families armed one against another in lasting feuds. Such terrible combinations of wickedness have been stirred up to satisfy honour, a word bearing a fair semblance, and sometimes indeed rightly used to denominate what is lawful, and expressive of the true dignity of humanity; but how often in its common use denoting nothing else than the fatal sin of pride. So, again, when we speak of hurt or wounded feelings, if we examine ourselves more closely, we find that it is rather some high conceit that has been humbled, or our opinion despised, or some fault exposed, or some disagreeable truth plainly told, or some reproof galling us; in fact, the writhing of the

heart under some painful humiliation. But the most deceitful working of pride is in the midst of good works, when we are warmly bent on the more earnest service of God. Such is spiritual pride. When all other pride is laid low, when an offence can be borne without resentment, when the cheek may be smitten without anger, when we could bear to have our rights trampled on without a thought of resistance; when the heart is so tamed, that it can bear contradiction, reproof, or contempt, and yet not secretly murmur, or rise up against it,—even then the soul, still proud, when pride seems cast out, will secretly lift itself up, and please itself in the thought of its own spiritual advancement, and think highly of its own good deeds, and speak of them, or rejoice to hear them praised. When the left hand ought not to know what the right hand doeth, the heart will secretly tell over to itself its own sacrifices and sufferings, its own superiority and successes; will contrast its good with others' evil, thinking more highly, and esteeming itself more highly, than others, and loving to go up to take the higher place in the fancied scene of its own imaginations.

We need then to be very watchful over ourselves, in order to detect the workings of pride.

When angered, or sad, disappointed, or cast down, we need a suspicious search into our hearts, lest injured pride be the secret cause. If eager to undertake some work for God, or desponding, and ready to relinquish it, let us enquire whether it be not some thought of self-exaltation which urged us to commence, and some feeling of personal vexation causing us to flag. Pride clings so closely even to the most sacred designs, and insinuates itself with such power into the holiest circle of our inmost thoughts, that it requires a practised self-examination to disentangle the evil from the good. Secondary motives stealthily prevail over the higher motives. The love of self ever hangs about the love of God. Zeal for the service of God is mingled with the desire of honour. Our subtle foe will assume every shape of dissimulation. It is the earliest sin that rises up in the self-will of the froward child; it is the latest over which the departing servant of Christ has to mourn. When you can bear all reproof sweetly; when you can listen to the painful truth, and still love the reprover; when you can be thwarted in a fondly-cherished scheme, and yet be patient: when you can endure to be passed by unnoticed; to have your opinion disregarded, or

your rights injured, or your wishes set at nought, or your authority set aside, and yet there be no murmuring, no resentment, no secret grudge, but your heart still gentle, and kind, and forbearing, and content; if, moreover, you can enter heartily into works done for God, and yet feel no self-exaltation in success, nor disappointment in failures, knowing that God's will is done, and His glory served equally, whatever the end of the work of His creatures be; or if you can bear to see another accomplish for God what your hands have failed to do, and yet you can offer up to God as earnest thanks and praise to the Giver of all good,—then you may trust that pride has been subdued, and that you are being exalted in the lowliness of Christ.

Lastly, let us consider what are the chief means by which humility may be cherished, and deepened within us. First, it will depend greatly on the thoughts we habitually cherish, just as a better soil will make the better fruits to grow. Think then of yourself as a creature living on the perpetual mercy of God. Think that all you have is not your own, but given to you; that you are nothing but with God's grace. And again, think what sin has made you,—how your whole being, your understanding, your

heart, your imagination, your senses, are defiled by sin; how you fall again and again through the same infirmities; how ignorant of many things; how readily deceived; how in all things imperfect and liable to err. Think how many secret sins, which, were they known, would shame you before the eyes of all men. Ponder such thoughts. Let the habitual current of your mind be leavened with such humiliating reflections. Recall these thoughts again and again. Our mind will become what our constant thoughts are.

Again, set before your mind the example of our Lord; His meekness, and lowliness, in all His earthly course. Call up the vision of the many scenes in which His lowliness is so wonderfully shewn. Impress these upon your heart, and dwell on them; love the grace which was thus shewn in Him. Feel how angels adore the Son of Man, with the deeper amazement, as His humiliations became more and more astonishing. In the glory of His humility, feel how this grace is honoured before God and man. Not merely were His humiliations greater than those of all His brethren, but as He was in all points tempted like as we are, even so was He humbled in all the self-same humiliations with which we

are so sorely tried. Outward poverty and lowness of station; railings and suspicions; evil names and public ribaldry; the scorn of the lowest among the people, and the crushing tyranny of the great; solitude, and the desertion of friends; the disappointment of hopes, and the rejection of unwearied love; the fruitlessness of self-devotion, and travailings in vain; all these He knew,—as well as all the unspeakable humiliations which gathered more thickly around Him as His death drew nearer, and the unutterable shame of that death, which no words can express. To be humbled then is to become like Him. To be humbled is to be conformed to His image, before whom “every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth.” The very desire of praise should therefore make us humble. We are in the truest sense exalted in honour, as we learn to bear the humiliations of our lot in the spirit of Jesus.

Lastly, we must learn to put away all desire of the honour that cometh of man. It is the prevalence of this strong desire that, above all other causes, hinders the growth of a true humility. And as this strong passion is overcome, and the mind becomes dead to the thought of all human fame, so we become open to the blessed influences of the meekness and lowliness of Jesus.

To check, therefore, and, by degrees, by God's gracious help, to silence within us that urgent craving after the praise and regard of men, should be our constant endeavour: we must resolve that we will cherish no wishes for self-distinction, no longings for notoriety, no desire even for the attentions and regard of those whom we love, but to be as nothing in the eyes of others, as deserving nothing but humiliation and reproach, as less than the least of all, and ever wishing to see others esteemed more highly than ourselves. While we ever really seek to take the lowest place, we shall be insensibly called of God to the exalted honour of His saints, whose whole being is lost in the glory which surrounds His Presence, in Whom alone they live, and move, and have their being. For this we need great self-restraint over the inward thoughts, much watchfulness and prayer. We need efforts to wrestle with and cast out all those inward most secret thoughts and longings which are ever striving for the mastery. As they fall, so we rise. As they pass away from the mind, so we become able to appreciate and love the honour which cometh of God only; which in the day when He gathereth up His jewels, He will make manifest before the eyes of angels and of men.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LOVE, THE KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS.

ST. MATT. xxii. 40. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

IF we were asked what portion of our nature were the most amiable and blameless, we should probably agree in saying, our affections. We should point to the love with which a mother loves her child, and which a child returns to a mother; or to the tried attachment kept up for years between two friends; or to the devotedness of a true love between man and woman, ripened into the constant affection which often makes married life so full of blessing. And we might justly say, that here we see the fairest side of human nature; that man cannot be utterly lost to all good, while these feelings of the heart remain. We might feel that, notwithstanding our fall, and our inheritance of sin and woe,

some relics of our original state, and of paradise itself, yet linger upon earth in the affections of home, and the confidence and sympathy of faithful love.

But, on the other hand, consider what relation these human affections bear to the God from Whom they flow; how far our Creator is the object and guide of all these warmer feelings of our nature, and you will be struck with the melancholy conviction, that they have greatly departed from their true end. What then we look upon as the fairest portions of our being have shared the same alienation from God which has befallen all other portions of it. The most amiable and attached families, the kindest friends, may have in them no sign or motion of a higher love, no apparent consciousness of God's presence, or of His claims upon the heart.

There is a common way of speaking that tends to blind men's eyes against this truth. It is hardly necessary to do more than point out the immense influence which popular expressions have on the mind, even when they are opposed to holy Scripture itself. Now the high regard with which many speak of kind and affectionate persons, as having *good* hearts, is calculated in a fatal manner to deceive. Our Lord said, that

there is "none good but God;" but if we apply this term, as we surely may in a modified sense, to a creature, yet it would be utterly false to call any heart good, if its affections be altogether alienated from God. Warmth and kindness there may be, but if there is no beating of the heart towards the very Author of one's being, if all this warmth and kindness, which He inspired for higher ends, are spent in entire forgetfulness of Him, how can the idea of goodness be applied to such a heart? Are not this very amiableness and these kindly qualities the greatest condemnation of their possessor? for the greater the capacity for the love of God, the greater the sin in abusing so high a gift. There is indeed no deeper or surer mark of the fall, than the alienation of the heart from God. This is Satan's last and most fatal work. The poison of sin has entered into the very sanctuary of our being. The centre of the most sacred feelings, which form the blessing and joy of home, where all that is best and purest of human kind is nurtured, is itself struck with the taint of sin, and is turned away from God. The blight has spread everywhere. The very core of the tree is corrupt. Sin has entered in, and possessed and laid waste the holiest place of the human soul.

It has blackened the fountain-head of our life. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint."

There are two respects in which the human affections, however warm and kindly, may be altogether sinful. Firstly, this is the case when the affection fixes itself on some object more than upon God. The object may be innocent; it may be God's own gracious gift to us: the sin is not in loving the object, but in loving it too much; in unduly exalting it into the place of God. "This is the first and great commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." These words do not mean that we are to love none other, but that we are to love none more. With the highest love of which our nature is capable; with such warmth, and earnestness, and joy of intercourse, as our nature owns; so are we to love God. The love of father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister, friend, are not opposed to the love of God, but they have a lower claim on us than the love of God. When the love of such near objects of affection interferes with that higher love, they are to be put aside; when it seeks to occupy a larger space, when we are conscious that stronger feelings beat to-

wards a fellow-creature than towards our Creator and our Redeemer, that we would do more for any other than for Him who made and redeemed both us and them, we are then fallen; we are then making a human idol, and bowing down toward it; we have dethroned God from His rightful place within the heart, and substituted a fellow-creature in His room; we are guilty of spiritual idolatry; we have resisted the very first claim that God makes upon us: "My son, give me thine heart." It is not to the exclusion of all other loves that God requires us to love Himself, but all other loves are to be held subordinate to the love of Him; for He explained His own commandment when He said, "He that loveth father or mother *more* than Me, is not worthy of Me."

Secondly, human affections may be sinful from their selfishness. When our Lord speaks of love towards our neighbour, He uses one brief word that involves a momentous truth as to the character of that love: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as* thyself." Love and kindness are in themselves the mere impulses of our nature; they exist in man as instincts in a brute. There is no virtue in them of themselves. They are

but amiable qualities of the human heart, which a man exercises as naturally, and as much for his own sake, as when he hungers or thirsts. It is often far more pleasant to oneself to be kind than otherwise. So, too, various sinful motives may enter into our kindest affections. We may be kind to win another's favour, or to obtain praise, or to gratify a love of power. We may be kind because we have no temptation to be otherwise. It is merely a natural feeling, and may become a servant of sin, equally as it may be a servant of righteousness. God has set before us the only true picture of Christian kindness in the Epistle to the Corinthians: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Here is love brought under the rule of a higher life; subdued by a religious power; exercised under restraint; leavened by a new spirit; divested of all selfishness; freed from envy, jealousy, or suspicion; tempered by gentleness, forbearance, humility; carried out into

acts of self-denial; unwearied by time and watching. Here is love refined, purified, and made like to what a religious spirit would cherish towards itself; not borne away by mere impulse, nor gratifying the passion of a nature unsanctified, but ruled and hallowed by grace. Such then is the love which we should cherish and exercise towards our fellow-creatures. In the brief words of our Lord, embodying this high truth: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

When human affection towards parent, or wife, or child, or brother, or sister, or friend, beats in harmony with such a spirit, and is regulated by such rules, it becomes a Christian virtue and a grace. But so far as it is unregulated, and at variance with such a law, and is not chastened by the Spirit which descendeth from above, it is only a propensity of our fallen nature, and has upon it the guilt of sin.

In these two ways, then, sin enters deeply into the exercise of the affections. Our affections are the gift of God. But it is sin to exercise any gift of God without due regard to Him Who gave it, or the end for which it was given, or the law by which it is His will to regulate it. The higher the gift, the greater the sin, if it be

abused. When the sin lies in the very depth of the heart, it strikes nearest to the creature's life. Such liability to fall is, moreover, the more dangerous, because it is concealed under so much that is amiable, and happy, and bright; and also because we are so quickly carried away in the gush of feelings, and blinded by the excitement and engrossing warmth of passion. Let us then clearly mark where such sin lies, and seek to discern its fatal tendencies. It falls under two heads. We may love, and yet God not be the highest object of that love; or, again, we may love a fellow-creature, but not in the same spirit with which we love ourselves.

In two respects then we need to be changed, before even this better part of us can be freed from sin.

First, our affections must be set only on right objects, and, above all such objects, on God Himself. Love to God Himself, however high and beyond all thought His being is, will be shewn nevertheless in the same acts in which it shews itself towards our fellow-creatures. In the desire to please, in yielding up our own will to His, in longings to be with Him, in delight in the sense of His presence, in opening our heart to Him, in seeking to know Him more and

more, love to God will be shewn, as by like acts love to a fellow-creature is shewn.

Secondly, we need that the exercise of our affections towards our fellow-creatures be purified from all selfish stains. To love even those who are nearest and dearest to us in the flesh, without such sin, needs continual watchfulness and prayer. To cast out envy, to overcome pride, to subdue self-will, to check all anger, are most needful works in order to love as a servant of Christ should love. And this must be at all times, even in the midst of home, and in daily companionship.

How deeply important it is that we should strive to attain such grace, judge from our Saviour's memorable words: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The whole moral law of God stands or falls according to the love which beats in our heart. It is remarkable that the Scripture does not teach love as a duty distinct from other duties. There is no one of the ten commandments which teaches us to love. In the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, love is not mentioned as one of the blessings. But yet we find Scripture speaking of love as if there were no other commandment but it. In the

text our Lord speaks of love to God and our neighbour as the two great commandments, and He mentions no other. St. Paul says that "love is the fulfilling of the law." And still more emphatically, when enumerating certain commandments, the Apostle says: "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

What then is the interpretation of these apparently contradictory statements? It is simply this: that love is not merely one duty separate from others, but it is the spirit and life of all duty. Love runs through all commandments, and gives to all their Christian character. No commandment is fulfilled, unless love be in it. Love must be the motive and leavening principle of our acts, or they are worthless. Even nature teaches us this. What mother would be content with a cold performance of duty towards her from her child? There is something unnatural in the very idea of a child obeying its parent, or a parent cherishing her child, out of mere duty, without love. Again, where there is love, a parent feels that all dutifulness will flow forth from it, as its natural fruit. So equally impossible is it to obey God without loving

Him; and again, "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments."

Love then is seen to be the one mark of all graces, because it is the life of all. From it they flow forth as from their only true source; and they exist only so long as love flows with them. If we were to fulfil all the commandments most strictly, and yet love were wanting, there would be no obedience that God could accept. It would indeed be only the semblance of obedience, not the reality. The very principle of obedience would be wanting, if love were wanting. Love and obedience are in fact necessary the one to the other, and the one completes the other. As the perfect light is of no single colour, and yet contains all colour, so love is no single duty, but contains all duties; and as all the colours duly mingled together make the perfect light, so a true observance of all the commandments is love.

On this account it is that love is the sign of our regeneration: "Every one that loveth," saith St. John, "is born of God." Our regeneration has not manifested itself aright, till love become the leading principle of our lives. So likewise love is only a sure mark of our knowing God. "He that loveth not," saith the same

Apostle, "knoweth not God." To know God is to know His nature, to perceive His works, to understand His will; and if a man knows not what love is, how can he know anything of the ways of God? "for God is love." The very foundation of religion then rests on love, for the knowledge of God is the beginning of all religion. It is on this account also that St. Paul assures us that all knowledge and all inspiration, and the working of miracles, and even every sacrifice and suffering he could undergo, and the yielding up even of his very life, would all be vain, unless divine love were the ruling principle of his life.

But how can such love be gained? It is by studying the only true pattern of love, even the love of Jesus; and by prayer, that what we cannot have by nature we may have as a divine gift, through His Spirit dwelling in us, and breathing in all our acts and words. Love is of God only, and true human love is only of Him who is both God and Man. It is on our knees, with the divine life of Jesus impressed on our hearts, His own spirit conforming us unto Himself, that we learn to love, even as we are loved.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE.

DAN. iii. 25. *He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*

THE holy Scriptures detail to us the history of men; and in recording human actions, it has pleased God to employ such language and descriptions as might be found in an ordinary book. In this respect the Scriptures resemble any human history. The beauty and power with which the events are recorded mark indeed the inspiration of a mind higher than man; still more does the insight of the human heart which those histories exhibit, make us feel that we are listening to the words of One to Whom alone the secrets of the heart are revealed. But yet they are

human events, recorded in human language, as a man might relate them to his fellow. But the difference which strikes us so forcibly in the history of human events recorded in the Scriptures is this, that we are perpetually brought into contact with invisible beings. We see men talking with mysterious forms, or hearing voices from heaven, or seeing visions. As we read of some ordinary event, suddenly, behold, a veil is withdrawn; and when we thought there was but a man before us, we see an angel by his side; or we think that it is only an angel, and we find that there is God Himself. We read of some work which we have been accustomed to ascribe to natural causes, and we find it to be the work of some heavenly minister; or we watch the movements of a man like to ourselves, and, lo, he is directed by some messenger from God; or we behold a worshipper at the altar, and an invisible being suddenly appears to convey the offering to the heavens. And these mysterious appearances come before us in all places alike, and on all manner of occasions. To Abraham under the oak, to Jacob in the desert, to Moses at the bush, to Jonah in his flight, to Daniel in his captivity, to Manoah in the field, to Samuel as a child in the temple;—

in different forms and diverse circumstances, beings of another world appear and hold with them familiar intercourse. We at once draw the solemn conclusion that we live and move in the immediate presence of an innumerable company of unearthly creatures, great in power and active in ministries of mercy; and that in the midst of all there is One Who is above all, Whom we feel to be ever present, and Who, in secret mystery, ever and anon reveals Himself.

Further, we may observe in the Scriptures that the operations of these invisible beings are spoken of with as much simplicity and reality as the ordinary works of men. There is no different language used in reference to the one than to the other. There is no magnifying the invisible above the visible, no astonishment expressed by the writer. He seems to be writing as familiarly of the one as of the other, as if his mind were as conversant with the events of another world as of our own.

And further, as we read such accounts, the earthly portions of the scene before us pass away, and the heavenly portion occupies our deeper thoughts, so vividly is the heavenly presence described. The men, and the works of men spoken of, sink into comparative insignificance;

the forms and works of the unearthly beings who are revealed from behind the veil absorb the mind.

It is this which gives such mystery to the Word of God. The invisible comes forth and mixes itself with the visible. Heaven and earth become one. We feel that we are living and moving in the midst of an innumerable company of angels; that we are in the very presence of God; that at any moment the cloud may open, and we see almost even as we are seen. It is not that there is anything of fancy that fills the mind; it is not a mere dream of the brain. What is unseen and eternal is as real as that which is seen and which is temporal; all is true. It is the marvellous revelation of what is ordinarily hidden from our eyes which God is pleased to make, shewing that there is another world about us besides this visible world; and as we read, the picture drawn by the hand of the Spirit of God fixes itself upon our heart.

The history in the first lesson of to-day is a striking instance of what has been said. We there read of the three faithful Israelites, who would not, even at the cost of their lives, bow down and worship the golden image. We read then of the furnace exceeding hot, and the flame of fire; then these three men, Shadrach, Meshech,

and Abednego, fall down bound into the midst of it. And then suddenly "Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" Behold, there is a fourth moving before his eyes in the furnace. "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

The wonder that these three men should walk unhurt in the midst of the fire, astounding as it is to contemplate, seems less forcibly to strike the mind of the reader than that which follows. The thought of their wonderful preservation—not even the smell of fire passing upon them—fades away in the contemplation of that unearthly form which accompanies them. We not merely see a miracle, we see the very worker of the miracle. We behold the astonishing security of these three men, encircled by the flames amidst which they walk. But, what is far greater, we behold the very presence of Him who thus shields and guards them in the fire. The appearance of this majestic form, like the Son of God, swallows up the thought even of those blessed servants of God in the dreadful sacrifice

to which they had yielded their bodies, and the sudden most marvellous deliverance which their God had vouchsafed.

Let us pause now, and lay to heart some of the reflections which this scene is calculated to suggest. First, let us mark well in what the mystery consists. It consists in the appearance, not in the actual presence, of this unearthly form. What was seen by the astonished king of Babylon is an universal truth. There is always One beside us, as really present, though we see Him not; every act of ours passes under the full gaze of His eye; every movement of ours is before Him; He moves as we move. There is a Fourth, unseen, wherever three are gathered together in His name. Had we eyes to see, we should behold His form as bodily present as when He startled the heathen king. The same scene of mystery exists everywhere. We are never alone. In our agony when we feel most desolate, or in our hour of joy, alike is He with us, who alone is able to shield us from the blast of the fiery furnace, or to sanctify our bliss. In every company there is One more than human eye can see; and when all are departed from us, He still is left as the companion of our solitude and guide of our way. The invisible God and His heavenly ministers

only occasionally appear, but, nevertheless, they are perpetually present.

Further, such remarkable visions in the Old Testament are expressive of another momentous truth. The appearance we have been considering was that of a human form: the king saw four *men* walking in the midst of the fire. The invisible Being, as He revealed Himself, assumed the lineaments of humanity. It was a prophetic vision of the incarnation of the Son [of God. There is something strikingly convincing in the way in which this great truth is foretold in the Old Testament. It was not merely the subject of prophecy; not merely are there positive texts asserting that God would thus come down to us, and take our flesh and dwell among us; but the truth was represented in actual visible scenes. The mysterious union of God and man in one person was thus foreshadowed. The human eye was as it were habituated by degrees to the wondrous sight of God incarnate which was about to break upon the world. God was to be made man, and these prophetic visions were sent before as heralds of His approach. To prepare the minds of the sons of men for that wondrous birth of the God-man, was the purpose of the appearance of these mysterious forms, which bore

the semblance of humanity. Those appearances were indeed but shadowy lineaments, assumed for the time and laid aside ; they did not involve any change in the Spiritual Being who thus for a moment became visible to the eyes of men ; as was indeed the case when Jesus actually came. He really took of our nature into Himself, never again to be divided. In Him was accomplished the personal union of the divinity with the humanity ; it was not merely a form like the Son of God, but it was the very Son of God in the very nature and form of man. But this great truth was typified through the ages that went before, in those mystical visions that then only took the shape of what the Son of God was afterwards about to assume the very substance.

Again, it is remarkable how the appearances of God with man were so often associated with sufferings. It was in the burning bush, though unconsumed, that God appeared to open the way for the revelation of His will to the Israelites, as before to Abraham God appeared to ratify the earlier covenant in a lamp of fire passing between the divided carcasses of the victims. So this Holy Form was seen now in the midst of the fire ; in the midst of agony, though unharmed ; through unspeakable terrors, though superior to them all ;

amidst the raging blast, yet so secure that even the smell of fire passed not upon Him. Surely here was a lively image of that future scene, when the Son of Man was to appear triumphant even upon the cross, dying, yet incapable of corruption or decay, and out of the depth of His torment bringing life and immortality to light.

As then the appearances of God in the Old Testament had a very frequent reference to our blessed Lord's incarnation, so had they also not uncommonly a reference to His passion. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The vision of the coming Saviour thus breaks forth upon our view throughout the Old Testament, alike in prophecy or in type. Along the line of four thousand years we behold the preparation for that awful scene which at last was consummated on Calvary.

This same gracious Being, as He passed out of our sight, when His sufferings were accomplished, gave us the promise of a special presence never to cease. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," was His parting assurance to His people. And the consciousness of this presence is at once the greatest check against sin, and the strongest stay in trial. The whole aspect of our life changes when we remember

Him. "He is here," is a thought that would swallow up all other thoughts. Some strong temptation comes over us so rapidly as to anticipate all preparations for it, hurrying us away before the mind has time to summon its powers, and then one earnest recollection of His near presence would stay us in our danger. Or again, if tried by some severe pain, what exceeding strength of endurance is imparted when we turn our eyes to our suffering Lord, and lose the thought of our own agony in the remembrance of His. Or, if we have some irksome or hard duty to fulfil, is there any thought that more surely nerves us for the trial than the recollection that we are not alone, but in the very presence of the Almighty, who Himself has laid on us the command. To walk through life with this constant remembrance on our mind is unceasing strength.

Let us learn then to lift up our hearts, and realize this great companionship in which we live, and move, and have our being. "We walk by faith, not by sight." Let us think over and over again, and impress more and more deeply in our hearts, the great fact of the presence of God and His holy angels at all times and in all places. "Thou, God, seest me," should be our constant

thought. Specially is it a help to us to be able, as we may, to look to God in the human form which He mercifully took for us ; for our Lord, when He took our nature, took it never to be laid aside again : He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Still wearing the form of humanity, and, as of old, whether in sorrow or in joy, still touched with the feeling of our infirmity, our Lord is with us. He still moves in the midst of the fires of suffering humanity ; He upholds and comforts us ; He passed into the heavens, and is now on the right hand of God ; but it was only to return to us with a closer spiritual presence.

He who is as truly man as He is truly God, is with each one of His servants from his birth even to his last hour,² and through the dark valley, and till he reach the blessed land which is very far away ; with each one, as with all the members of His body, as surely as He moved beside His three sainted ones in the furnace.

And this thought should lead us to a spirit of thankfulness and of trust. When we look back at troubles through which we have been safely brought, or difficulties overcome, or fears which were dissipated as they approached, or hard duties which were accomplished, we may believe that it

was the invisible presence of God which quenched the violence of the fire, and protected us through the season of trial. We did not perhaps realize His presence and assistance at the time, but as we now look back, the veil is withdrawn, and we know that it could have been none other than Himself. And when we look forward, and our hearts faint at the prospect of terrors and difficulties lying in our path, and we feel our own utter incapability to meet them, should not the assurance that He who has been with us from our birth unto this hour, will be with us to the end? Should we lose hope now, when our redemption is more nigh? Can we doubt that He will be less watchful over us, less ready to uphold us, when our salvation is nearer than when we believed? We may surely trust Him who, during the six thousand years of this earth's history, has never failed any one of the sons of men who put their trust in Him, and whose own word, sealed by His dying love, has promised that He will never fail us, nor forsake us, but will perfect the good work that He hath begun.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

REJOICING IN SPIRITUAL SERVICES.

EPHES. v. 18, 19. *Be filled with the Spirit ; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*

ST. PAUL is here enumerating the various duties of Christians, and enforcing them upon his Ephesian converts. In the former part of the chapter he had been warning them against those sins which were practised by Gentiles : fornication, uncleanness, foolish talking, and inconvenient jesting. These things, he says, had called down the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience ; but some would deceive them into the notion that these sins were not so displeasing to God. Therefore he cautions them : “ Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Lastly, he warns them against the sin of drunkenness : “ Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ;” and he goes on

to remind them that they had higher joys than those of the flesh : they were not left joyless, but their joys were spiritual. He would not debar them from pleasure ; he would only direct their joyous feelings aright. They were indeed to renounce those earthly, sensual, devilish joys, in which heathens revelled ; but they had been endued with new powers of enjoyment, and had new and heavenly objects on which to exercise them : “ Be filled with the Spirit ; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” This outward expression of praise was a plain duty, and as such is here commanded ; but it is also put before them as a privilege ; a great blessing, more than enough to make up for the loss of all those things in which they had once taken pleasure. Thus St. Paul teaches *us* also that the offering of spiritual worship is a high privilege, and a comfort under trial ; he bids us (as on this day) to rejoice in it, and to make it our pleasure ; and at the same time he puts it before us as a duty.

Every duty done in a right spirit is a service done to God. The daily labours of a poor man for his family, the patient toils of a careful mother, the cheerful services of an obedient child, if done

as they ought to be done by Christians, all rise up as an acceptable service before our heavenly Father. He looks down from heaven upon His children toiling in this troublesome world. He knows what they endure who go about their every-day common duties with cheerful submission, labouring in the very fire (as it were) of poverty or deep suffering; and wherever He sees the mark of His dear Son's Cross, there He acknowledges a service done to Him, and He stores up the memory of these forgotten self-denials against the day of reward. When David was keeping watch over his father's sheep in Bethlehem, he was doing service unto the Lord; so also when he slew the giant and delivered God's people. The last cake of the widow of Zarephath, divided with the prophet, was an acceptable sacrifice to God. The spices and sweet ointments brought by the two Marys, very early in the morning, to anoint the body of their crucified Lord, were doubtless well-pleasing in His sight who trieth the hearts and reins. And even when none is near, when the penitent Christian is on his knees alone, then his bitter words of self-reproach, his humble confessions, his prayers for pardon, his groans, his tears, rise up as a sweet-smelling savour before the all-holy God.

He accepts the self-denial and self-chastisement of those who overcome themselves, and turn away resolutely from the sin which is very pleasant to the eye of their natural man.

But besides these duties, there are others which are specially sanctified, as it were, to the glory of God: the sacrifice, I mean, of praise and thanksgiving; the worship due from the creature to the Creator. It is indeed a wonderful mystery that we, at best compassed about with infirmity, and struggling amidst a world of sin, for very life, should be able (through grace) to give honour unto Him. We miserable sinners, who cannot save ourselves, who cannot deliver our own souls from what we ourselves have brought upon them; who cannot deliver each his brother, nor even help him, unless God will; who cannot turn away a very small evil from our bodily frame; who cannot add one cubit to our own stature,—can yet give glory to the Lord of heaven and earth. We can praise and magnify His holy Name; and our praise, He says, is honour: “Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me.” He chargeth His angels with folly, and yet He accepts our psalms and hymns. This great mystery is to be fully understood only in and through Him who took our nature upon

Him ; who became man, and as man said, " I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Doubtless it is only part of the great mystery,—that of redemption. Doubtless the praises of men are pleasing in the sight of God, because He in whom God is well pleased has taken man unto Himself. Still it must ever be a mystery to us, how we can honour Him through whom alone we can utter words of praise. Let us wonder and adore. Let it be sufficient for us that He who calls us brethren has taught us to say, " Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name" Through Him our imperfect and sin-defiled praises, if they come from the heart, are accepted.

Let us go on to consider more in detail why it is so great a privilege to be allowed to praise God.

1. And in the first place, from what has been already said, we may learn that the service of praise is a high and glorious employment, because it is offered unto our heavenly Father ; because it is a direct ascribing of honour to Him. Other duties, it is true, are acceptable in His sight, but they are not so immediately offered to Him ; He blesses us in them, but we are not so conscious of the blessing, our thoughts are fixed upon others, or upon ourselves. But

in praising Him we are brought immediately into His presence; we speak to Him, and we think of Him. We then know and feel that His eye is upon us. Then all the world is as nothing to us, and we are as nothing to the world: we are addressing the Invisible, and are carried away from the regions of sense, and living, for a little while, in the heavenly light of His spiritual presence. Even of the holiest it may then be most truly said, their life is hid with Christ in God. He is indeed ever with them; He dwelleth in them, and they in Him. But at such times chiefly they are conscious of His presence and rejoice in it; and moreover, the sacrifice of thanksgiving is a chief means of strengthening the spiritual union between Christ and His people, and of bringing them more and more into conformity with Him. Surely it is an unspeakable privilege that we are thus allowed to come into our Maker's presence! it is a precious fruit of His heavenly grace, the portion of God's regenerate children; for it is His special gift bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ. In that holy Name we are permitted to come boldly to the throne of grace, not only to find grace and help in time of need, but to speak also of the might of His marvellous acts, and to tell of His

greatness ; to utter with feeble and unworthy lips His unspeakable praises. Thus has our Redeemer restored to us, in the permission of a spiritual worship, the high privilege of communion with our Maker which Adam lost, when driven from the garden in which he had been used to hear the voice of the Lord God walking in the cool of the evening. Then man spake with his Creator face to face ; now he speaks through the in-dwelling Spirit, from earth to heaven ; an unheard communion, for well we know the *sound* of our songs of praise rises not to the clouds, much less to the throne of Him who sitteth above the stars ; but yet a real converse, for He needeth not the sound of words who readeth the thoughts of the heart.

2. But again, the psalms and hymns of the Church on earth are no mere earthly sound ; they are echoes of a more glorious service ; they are feeble types and faint shadows of the ceaseless songs of the blessed angels, and they have some share of their blessedness. We praise Him, we acknowledge Him ; the earth doth worship Him ; but not we only, nor only earth : to Him all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein. All holy and glorious beings are blessed in this one employment ; all alike

esteem it their great privilege to be allowed to worship Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to adore the Lamb. They cease not day nor night; they are not weary. When the earth was made by the word of God, in the beginning, then the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy; nor have they ceased ever since to strike their golden harps to His honour, nor will they ever weary throughout eternity. We too are permitted to unite our feeble voices with theirs; our song of "Holy, Holy, Holy," does not ascend alone, for continually the same threefold ascription is ascending from the lips of cherubim and seraphim.

3. Nor let us forget that all our everlasting hopes are closely connected with this holy service. If ever we attain (through God's mercy) to the presence of His glory, our great employment throughout eternity will be to sing the praises of our Redeemer, and to glorify our heavenly Father with songs of thanksgiving. In the wonderful description of the glories of heaven revealed to St. John, the praises offered by the glorified saints hold a prominent place. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne,

and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.... these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” And again: “I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders:.... these are virgins.... these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” Here again we see that the holy songs of the Church on earth are not earthly: heaven is their end; they are but the beginnings of an eternal worship; their home is heaven. While we send up our feeble but accepted cry, the angels in heaven are uttering a more worthy song; and the souls of the faithful departed are crying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true.” But a time is coming when these varied voices shall be all united in one glorious song, when the angels shall stand about the elders and four beasts; and all shall fall before the throne on their faces, and worship

God ; “ saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”

Oh how blessed will our lot be if we are at length permitted to worship with that glorious company in the awful presence of the Divine Majesty ! Our blessed Saviour has gone thither to prepare a place for us, and thither we may go if we are faithful and obedient to our Lord while He is away. I suppose that we all hope to be one day enrolled among the saints, to share their happiness, and join their songs of praise. Is it likely that our hope will be fulfilled ? I have mentioned two sorts of duties : plain, homely duties, daily obedience, and the service of praise and thanksgiving. Well, let us ever bear in mind that our first duty is plain, simple, single-hearted obedience. We shall never share the angelic songs if we are not honestly choosing the good and pure, and guiding all our actions by the rule of right and wrong. If pleasant, and disagreeable, profitable, and hurtful, are our guides, rather than what will please God and save our souls, then neither will He accept our worship now, nor have we any ground of hope that we may join hereafter in the chants of the redeemed.

But if we have a good hope that we are living by the rule of God's commandments; if, like obedient children, we can trust that our heavenly Father is leading us upward towards His rest, then we may bless His Name that He permits us now to learn those notes of praise with which we hope to honour Him for ever. He is now teaching us by the services of His earthly sanctuary, to take our part in the liturgy of heaven. Oh let us delight to learn of Him, let us train ourselves in His appointed discipline, that we may be prepared to worship with angels.

I will conclude with a few practical lessons to be learnt from what I have been saying about our services of praise.

1. We must worship with reverence. Consider to whom our worship is addressed, even to the Almighty Father of all, who declares Himself a consuming fire. Surely if we could but realize His awful presence; if we could but persuade ourselves that He is not far from us, but in our very presence, here in His house, listening, watching, reading our thoughts, we could not worship Him listlessly, thoughtlessly, irreverently! The holy angels here may teach us a lesson: they veil their faces when they approach Him, and fall down before Him, and magnify

Him by abasing themselves; while sinful men, with all their iniquities, perhaps, upon them, in the abjectness of their misery, are careless, bold, and irreverent in the presence of the All-pure. When we behold the glory of His majesty, then surely we shall fall down before Him, and our hearts shall tremble with awe; and if we are not raised up and strengthened by our merciful Saviour, we shall begin to call upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon us, and hide us from the overpowering awfulness of His glory; why, then, should we not with godly fear and humble reverence approach Him now? why, except that we do not believe Him present, as He says He is?

2. In the next place we must worship from the heart; for the service of the lips alone is no service to Him. As I said before, it is not the sound of our words that ascends to heaven, but the earnest wishes and thankful praises of the heart. If our hearts are elsewhere, we are not really in His house, though our bodies be here; nor will such formal services tend at all to prepare us for the worship of heaven. The mere speaking of good words will not prepare us to abide the consuming majesty of His presence who dwelleth in the heavens, to which we hope to come.

3. Consider, again, how grievous is the condition of those persons who take no pleasure in the worship of God's house. Angels and arch-angels, and all the company of heaven, have no better joy than to sing the praises of God. This always has been their employment, and always will be, and they are satisfied with it; while we become weary in a few hours of praising Him here, and loathe that pure worship which is the type of theirs. Nay, for such persons there is a more solemn thought still. They have no better hope for themselves than to join, for eternity, in the worship of God, and yet they know, if they will speak the truth, that it is a weariness to them at present; nor are they trying to love it better. They are content to endure it as a necessary condition of escape from misery, and to seek their pleasures elsewhere, too glad to be released from the restraints of the Lord's house, and the Lord's day, to more congenial employments.

Can we comfort and encourage such persons? Not in their present state. There is a fearful danger lest their souls be dead before God; lest the lusts of the world and of the flesh, and the cares of life, have hardened their hearts to heavenly things; and then the holy words of prayer

and praise are but dead words to them. To those who are dead, the services of our Church are but dead forms; to those who are living, they are living. If we come to Christ with prepared hearts, in faith and love, in hope of a better service, then the words of worship are instinct with life, and full of heaven. Oh let us pray God to put into our hearts real love of Him and His worship; let us ever pray that we may not be consumed by the greatness of His glory hereafter; but that, coming from time to time into His sacramental presence, and kneeling before Him in humility of heart, with holy joy glorifying and praising His name, we may ever be more and more prepared to join in the songs of angels and perfected spirits, in the presence of His visible glory in heaven.

4. And, in the last place, how should the vision of perfect bliss which here rises before us, quicken our hopes, and encourage us to perseverance! *Now* our spiritual services are faint and feeble at the best; they are varying and uncertain. Sometimes we find in them a joy which surpasses all other; but at other times our hearts are cold and dead. We may mourn over our spiritual dulness; we may confess it as a sin, (alas, that sin should find us out

even in these holiest occupations!) and yet we cannot rise at all times even to our own measure of thankfulness and praise. But *then* it will be all changed: then we shall know God even as we are known of Him; then we shall see our blessed Saviour as He is; then His love will so thrill through our whole being, that any occupation which hindered us from his praises would be painful to our renewed nature. In our present imperfect state we often, even when engaged in some work for God, find ourselves so taken up with the work itself as to forget for Whom we labour, and so cease to glorify Him, even while we are working in His Name; but when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, His glory will be not merely the end, but the very life and joy, of all our employments; so that it will be as impossible to cease from praising Him while following the occupations of heaven, as it would be for a man to labour in any earthly calling when his heart had ceased to beat. And this, I say, should be our great encouragement to a life of thankful praise in this world; for we begin to praise God now, that we may praise Him to all eternity. "I will magnify Thee, O God, my King," says the Psalmist; "I will praise Thy Name for ever and ever;" this is

his hope and confidence: "for ever and ever;" it was a thought full of holy joy; but then he adds, "Every day will I give thanks unto Thee." "Day by day," his resolution is, "I will give thanks unto Thee," because he knew that this daily thanksgiving was the only true preparation for the praises of that eternal day which has no successor: "Every day will I give thanks unto Thee, and will praise Thy Name for ever and ever." We too are preparing—it is our one great hope—for that unchanging day in which the hearts of the redeemed shall unite together with the angels that never fell, in one unceasing song of pure and perfect praise. Oh may we begin it here below, and continue it day by day, with faithful loving hearts! and then our thankful services will be indeed a foretaste of the service of heaven.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JOY A MARK OF TRUE CHRISTIANS.

HABAK. iii. 17, 18. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

“OTHER men,” (said Jesus to His apostles,)—“other men have laboured; and ye have entered into their labours.” And so also do we enter into the labours of the prophets, and enjoy the fulness of those blessings of which they spoke; seeing that they did not themselves receive their fulness of the good things which they foretold, for “it was revealed unto them, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister those things.” Since, then, the writings of the prophets were intended thus to minister to us, it is lawful

for each one of us to take up for himself the burden of that song which Habakkuk spake. When we from the heart can sing, "I will joy in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation," there is good hope that we shall also hereafter "sing the song of Moses the servant of the Lord, and the song of the Lamb before the throne of God," in heaven. They who would be joyful through eternity above, must learn to be joyful during the few days of their pilgrimage upon earth.

In all ages joy has been the peculiar inheritance of God's own people; and in order that they might have joy in Him, God poured down upon them of old time many outward blessings, and gave them good gifts in abundance. Thus Adam was at the first placed in Eden, in a paradise, or pleasure-ground, where "the Lord made every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food to grow." When Isaac blessed Jacob, he said, "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine;" and God gave Jacob the best of the cattle of Laban, with whom he served. So also when Jacob blessed his son Joseph, he said, "The Almighty God shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above, the blessings of the

deep that lieth under, blessings of the breast and of the womb." And this was again confirmed by Moses, who said of the tribe of Joseph, "Blessed of the Lord be his land for the precious things of heaven; for the dew and for the deep, for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things of the earth and of the fulness thereof." And again, of all Israel he said, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and beneath are the everlasting arms: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, and also his heavens shall drop down dew." And, "The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it." "It is a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year." Indeed, it would be long to recount all the blessings of earth which God promised to give unto Israel in order that they might thank Him, and be joyful in Him, and praise His holy Name; blessings which were

abundantly fulfilled in the reign of King Solomon, when Solomon had peace on all sides around him, "and Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

Now, perhaps, brethren, we think that if we were thus abundantly blessed in all that we put our hands unto, we should find it easier than we now do "to rejoice in the Lord always," but, indeed, the truth is far otherwise. Do we not find that, throughout the Old Testament history, the things which should have been for the wealth of God's people, became unto them an occasion of falling, and the fulness of their table was a snare unto them; so that when He fed them to the full, they assembled themselves together for all kinds of wickedness, until His wrath was kindled against them, and He made their "fruitful land to be barren for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein," so that their rich abundance ended in mourning instead of rejoicing; the voice of lamentation and woe was heard instead of songs of joy; for they forgot God their Saviour, who had done so great things for them.

And are we better than they? Are we sure we should not bring down on ourselves more

sorrow, if we had more outward means of rejoicing? But, even if it were otherwise,—if men would continue to enjoy abundant earthly blessings without abusing them, if fulness of bread did not turn the heart away from God, yet even then how could it be known, in the midst of all these good things, whether men were loving these things or God Himself? whether they rejoiced in the creature or in their Creator?

Do not we ourselves feel hurt when a friend thinks more about the value of the present we make him, than about our love which led us to give it to him? and shall the Giver of all good gifts be pleased when men rejoice so much in the things given, that they have not time to think of Him who gave them?

This was the very accusation which Satan brought against Job, saying, “Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about all that he hath on every side?” And for this reason God permitted Satan to take away from Job all outward blessings,—his servants, his cattle, and his children; and then, when Job said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord;” it was *seen* where *his* hopes were built, it was made manifest that Job’s joy had been in

the Lord always. And as God proved Job, so did He also ever prove His other chosen servants, even in the midst of the prosperity of His people ; leading them one by one through fire and water, till they could cry out from the heart, " Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Therefore also, when the time of the promise drew near, and the desire of all nations was about to come, God revealed more and more clearly to men what was the joy which He should bring with Him ; He taught men what true rejoicing in Him would be. And accordingly when Habakkuk (from whom this morning's first Lesson is taken), prophesied about six hundred years before the coming of Christ, after he had spoken of the terror of God's majesty, and of His judgments upon the ungodly, he ended his prophecy by professing his own sure trust in God, and his rejoicing in Him ; for that, though all outward blessings were withdrawn, though God should take away His gifts, yet God would still Himself remain, to be an overflowing well-spring and fountain of joy to all that put their trust in Him : " Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there

shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Yes, 'brethren, this is Gospel joy ; this the inheritance of the children of God ; proclaimed by the prophets of old time, published by her who (in the name of the whole Church), sung, " My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour ;" and proved by all the saints of God in their several generations. Yes, beloved, this is your portion also ; only do ye rise and claim your heritage. For this very purpose does God at times send you heavy trials ; He withholds the blessings of earth, or He takes away from you the desire of your eyes, even those whom you love as your own soul, that so you may the more find all your joy in the Lord, and the more rejoice in the God of your salvation. In this most especially is seen the difference between man's wisdom and the teaching of God's Spirit. Man at the best can only teach resignation in suffering : " It *must* be," say they, " therefore you need not struggle against it : you cannot escape from sorrow ; bide your time, and grief will wear away."

Miserable comforters are ye all, ye sons of men, who can speak nothing better than this

“ wisdom of the world !” But not so speak those who are taught of God. “ My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” “ Inasmuch as ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” These are the words of men who had themselves “ rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name sake.”

Yea, who would not rejoice to be made like his Captain, and his King? like his elder Brother, and his Saviour? If we be stripped of our raiment, as Jesus was before He was crucified, ought we not even then to be glad in the Lord? If we are for a time deprived of the sense of God’s love and favour towards us, even then ought we not to rejoice in God our Saviour, for that the Lord hath made us like to Him, who upon the Cross cried out, “ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” The Christian *joys* and rejoices in the Lord, not because he has no heavy trials, nor because he does not *feel* his trials, for he has the most tender heart, and grief and sorrow pierce him to the very quick; but he rejoices because he is upheld in his suffering, because his very anguish is a token to him that God is still the God of his salvation.

Remember, however, that we need not keep this precious comfort stored up for great trials, which come but seldom in our lives : even those whose lives run on most smoothly have many inward cares and sorrows ; and the oil of this joy of looking unto God, the more it is drawn forth, the more it still will run, like the widow's oil, which Elisha multiplied ; this oil of gladness will at all times smooth the surface of the waters, so that they break not over us and sink us, though the waves swell high, and the sea works and is tempestuous.

Ask yourselves then, brethren, whether you ever have joy in the Lord in your hearts ? for joy is something real and sensible, and you cannot easily be mistaken about it. Or are you contented to live on with joyless hearts, driving away sorrow as far as you can, and forgetting your griefs, drowning them in cares or in pleasures ; but still having no happiness within, no gladness, no lifting up of the heart, no foretastes of deeper joys to come ? In hours of silence or of solitude, can you be happy ? Can you with Isaac walk alone in the fields in the evening, and meditate on God's mercy ? Can you sit still in silent thought upon God's gracious ways till your hearts overflow with joy ? Do you

find a real pleasure in going over in thought the life of our Saviour upon earth ; in dwelling on the happiness of being with Him for ever in heaven ? Is the remembrance of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus pleasant to your soul ; or do you drive far away all that tells of heaven and hell, of death and judgment ? Brethren, if these things of God, of religion, of your own souls, are dull, heavy subjects to you ; if you are willing to hear them spoken of now and then in church, but find no satisfaction in calling them to mind at other times ; if you do not *joy* in that which tells you of the presence of the Lord, and do not rejoice in the salvation of God,—then be sure you are not fit to die ; you are not preparing yourselves to enter into the joy of your Lord ; you have not on a glad *wedding* garment ; beware, lest if the King should come in, ye be cast into outer darkness.

Are we not wont to think it a small thing, whether we have any joy of the Spirit in this life ? But indeed it is not so ; scarce any one precept is more frequently repeated than that, “ Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice.” And does not nature teach us the same lesson, that the spiritual life, if it be really life, must have some joy in it ? Look at little children in health, how glad they are ; look at the lambs,

how these also skip and play, for no other reason than for the joy of their hearts ; these have life in its full freshness, and nothing to mar it, and so the very feeling of life makes them rejoice. Oh ! that we, to whom has been given the life of the Spirit, had some portion of their gladness, that our hearts also might leap for joy.

Who does not know what fresh life and vigour is given to those who ascend high mountains ? Though they be before in good health, yet then they seem to acquire a new existence ; they feel as if relieved from a heavy burden ; when they come down again into the low country, their languor returns ; and when they once more ascend, their spirits again revive under the influence of the pure and clear air.

Thus do travellers write when they cross high ranges of hills ; but would not such words be equally true if they were spoken as an allegory of those who leave the low level of the world which lieth in wickedness, and seek to mount upwards towards the heavenly Sion, and feel their languor or heaviness return whensoever they fall back into the ways of the world, even though they commit no open or notorious sin ? Yes, the air of *that* " hill-country " is pure and invigorating ; it gives new life to those who pass through it, a life of

rejoicing, and of gladness of soul,—“even the lame man shall there leap as an hart.” We must not indeed imagine that this joy in leading a real Christian life is to be found in all persons in an equal degree. Like other good gifts, “God giveth it severally to every man as He will.” Some persons are naturally of a more sad and heavy constitution of mind; some suffer from diseases of the body, which wear away the spirits and make men sad in spite of all things; on some the hand of the Lord hath pressed heavily, so that all joy is darkened. “Call me not Naomi, that is to say, Pleasant; but call me Mara, that is, Bitter; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me,” is the voice of many a Christian heart; and above all, the remembrance of past sins and wasted talents must at times bring a gloom even over him whose sins are forgiven, and who is walking with God cheerfully and acceptably. But still, though these things may darken, they must not destroy our rejoicing in the Lord, who hath dealt so lovingly with us. Dark clouds may come over the earth, and hide the sun’s brightness, but still the sun is behind the clouds, ready to burst through if an opening is made; and he does give some light, even through the clouds; so that a dull day is very different

from night. So in the spiritual world ; the Sun of righteousness will ever give some light and gladness to the children of the day ; brighter than gold and silver are the edges of those clouds which hide this Sun ; the waves of trouble shall but speed those upon their way in whose hearts is shed abroad the joy of the Holy Ghost.

He who will serve the Lord acceptably, must serve Him with *gladness* ; the priests upon whom was the anointing oil, and who went in before the Lord, might not uncover their head nor rend their clothes in sorrow. If we would draw near unto the Lord, we must have a willing and a joyful heart ; there must be at least a seed of joy within us, and *that* a live seed, sprouting forth into the blade, though kept back it may be, in some cases, by wintry winds, so that it cannot yet put forth into ear. The full ripe fruit can only be in heaven.

Thus, then, a Christian life does not encourage a gloomy, sour, melancholy spirit ; yea, such a temper is quite contrary to it : such an one as this has *not* the wedding garment of Christ ; he deceives himself if he imagines that he is clothed with His righteousness, for one of the first of the fruits of His Spirit is joy. But again, as gloomy

moroseness is altogether forbidden to Christians, so also it is a bad sign in the spiritual life when men are so taken up with some pleasure of earth which is to come at some future day, that they have no patience to wait, no care for, or enjoyment of, the present time. Have you not read the words which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, as to their punishment if they forsook the Lord? "In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!" What utter misery is here; yet how near do those bring themselves to its likeness, who cannot attend to the duties of their daily life, because they are wishing that to-day were gone, and to-morrow, and the next day; and that such and such a day were come in which they hope to find their pleasure! It is well to enjoy such refreshments of the toils of life, *when* they come; we should use them with thankfulness, for they are God's gifts; and our minds need rest and change as well as our bodies. Only let us not be like children, who will watch to escape from the arms of a loving parent in order to reach their toys, because they know not the depths of that mother's love, and the blessings which she is calling down upon their heads. And truly, when

we give up our waking and our sleeping thoughts to joys of earth, we cannot have much of heavenly joy within; those who so eagerly pursue the toys of earth feel not the depth and blessedness of their heavenly Father's love.

But, in conclusion, where shall we now seek this joy which ends in joy everlasting? Remember the prophet's words, and follow them. Beware, above all things, that ye seek not for joy in any works of your own; you must seek to do God's will, and strive to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; you must joyfully thank Him when He enables you to do what is pleasing in His sight, (for this is a token and fruit of His love); but *rest* not in these things, let not your rejoicing be in any good thing done by you or in you, else will it return in tenfold sorrow upon your head. "Let the Lord rejoice over thee," but rejoice not thou in thyself; seek not to do good in order that thou mayest hereafter rejoice in thine own good works, but seek the Lord and His face evermore; here you shall find matter enough for the joy of a whole life. Hath not our God given to us great promises? In these we may rejoice, though it be with fear, lest we shall fall short of His heavenly rest.

(“ The Lord hath done great things for us already ; thereof will we rejoice ! ” We will rejoice in all that He hath revealed to us concerning Himself and His holiness ; in all that He hath done in our creation, preservation, and redemption : we will rejoice in tracing how He hath thus far brought us on our way in safety, and how He hath made all things work together for good to us. In this life, though all seem dark around us, though much is still dark within us ; “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet will we rejoice in the Lord, we will joy in the God of our salvation ; ” and then, when God our Saviour shall appear, we shall joy and rejoice before Him for ever, in that land where the tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month ; for to him that overcometh will Jesus give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. Amen.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE PRAISES OF WISDOM.

PROV. iii. 13—18. *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.*

RELIGION has her boast, as well as the world. She speaks her own praises, and tells her own value. Religious men indeed are humble and retiring. They will not vaunt themselves, nor speak of their own goodness, and yet they will glory in that good part which God has enabled them to choose. Men of this world glory in their wisdom; they lean on their own understandings; they are wise in their own eyes; they are noble, or high-spirited, or awake to their own interests;

they possess many really admirable qualities, and glory in them, as well as in others which are no subject for self-approval, and they despise those who are quiet and retiring, and ready to forego present advantages. Comparing themselves with the poor, the feeble, and the mourners, the majority of religious people, "They boast themselves in their riches, and strengthen themselves in their wickedness." They say, "We are they that ought to speak, who is Lord over us?" Well, the poorest and most despised of God's children need not be afraid to meet them on this ground. He may boldly say, "We are not ashamed to speak of our portion before the world. We hear the boastings of the men of this world, we listen to their praises of manliness, courage, freedom, glory, riches, and pleasure, and grant their value; yet we are not afraid to bring forward our little store of hopes and foretastes, and quiet confidence, mixed up with our poor little prayers, watchings, sorrows, and fears. And we say with all boldness, and calmness of unshaken confidence, One spark of heavenly wisdom is worth all your treasures. You boast yourselves, we distrust ourselves. You enjoy, we hope; you are merry and bold, we fear. You would not stoop to receive favours,

much less to ask them ; we humbly accept all that we have as a free gift, and give thanks for it ; you are honourable, we are despised. And yet we are quite satisfied with our portion. We do not envy you ; we would not change ; nay, more, we tell you that your portion is nothing worth ; we tell you that you are living for nothing, and that it had been better for you never to have been born, than that you should remain satisfied with the portion you have chosen. And out of mere kindness and earnestness of desire for your welfare, we ask you to give up the portion which as worldly men you most highly value, and to get heavenly wisdom." And religious men may well speak with confidence on this behalf, for they know that there is a traitor in the enemy's camp ; they know that after all worldly men distrust their own position, and in their inmost heart suspect that religious men have the best of it. It is commonly said that good men have a traitor within them, a natural inclination for present enjoyment ; and this is true : it is only by his being false to himself that a Christian can ever be injured by Satan. Satan cannot enter unless he finds an ally in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. But then, on the other hand, it is equally true that wicked men have that within them which

answers to the voice of truth, and tells them it is truth. Inclination in good men tempts them to listen to the world; but conscience in all men responds to the voice of heavenly wisdom.

Then let religion boast herself a little; let her tell her own praises; and you, my brethren, while you listen, if the lower part of your nature turns away, yet hear the voice of your conscience, which is supreme in your soul; let conscience, which alone speaks truth in your heart, respond to the lessons of wisdom. Obey the voice of your conscience, and follow her guidance, for she is your inward ruler and guide, nay, she is the secret voice of God's Holy Spirit within you.

And what is that wisdom of which so great things are spoken? "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom," the love of God is the *end and perfection* of wisdom; and obedience to His commands fills up what lies between. Shall I say it again? We must begin with fear, we must go on to obedience, we must be made perfect in love. This is the course of the Spirit of God; this is the path by which He leads us to the throne of God. By fear He drives us back from sin and death; by obedience He invigorates and nourishes that piercing faith which looks through the visible good things of this world, and sees

God in Christ ever present behind the veil which hides Him from our natural sight, but does not separate Him from our souls; and by love He makes us one with Him who is Himself the wisdom and the power of God. Hence we may say, in other words, that to have true wisdom is to dwell in Christ, and to have Him dwelling in us. To live wisely is so to live that He will live in us, strengthening us to act in a wise and holy manner (as we will) by His Spirit, approving our actions, acknowledging the likeness of His own life in them, and accepting them for His own sake.

This is that holy wisdom which the Bible praises: it is to choose the right and refuse the wrong; it is to desire the favour of God, rather than all that earth or heaven could give without His favour; it is to have the mind of Christ, to love the poor, to do good to the afflicted, as unto Him; to deny ourselves present pleasure for the sake of happiness hereafter; to take up our cross and follow Christ; to sell all that we have, that we may inherit eternal life. They who so live, live wisely; to them wisdom opens her stores, and pours out her bounty, and to all she holds out promises of similar benefits: "Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath killed

her beasts ; she hath mingled her wine ; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens ; she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither : as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live ; and go in the way of understanding." See you how wisdom glories in her riches ! She has a house of her own, a holy home, the Church ; she has meat for the sacrifice, and wine, a well-furnished table, plenty of servants, and room for all,—no poverty, no meanness, no lack of any good thing,—bread for the hungry, wine for the thirsty, medicine for the sick, rest for the weary, home, friends, kindred, and servants for the houseless wanderer. This is what wisdom is in herself ; this is what wisdom is in Christ ; and this is the portion of which all those partake who live wisely. " Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

" Doth not wisdom cry ? and understanding put forth her voice ? . . . She crieth at the gates at the entry of the city, and the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of men. O ye simple, understand wisdom : and, ye fools, be ye of an under-

standing heart. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things ; and the opening of my lips shall be right things ! . . . I love them that love me ; and those that seek me early shall find me. . . . Riches and honour are with me ; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold ; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment : that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance ; and I will fill their treasures." Here you see that wisdom does not keep her riches to herself, but pours them out on those who love her ; what she is herself, *that* she makes her children. Christ communicates His own goodness to those who believe on Him ; and from being mortal, those who learn wisdom from Him become immortal, as the wise man tells us of himself : " I myself also am a mortal man, like to all, and the offspring of him that was first made of the earth, . . . And when I was born, I drew in the common air, and fell upon the earth which is of like nature, and the first voice I uttered was crying, as others do. I was nursed in swaddling clothes and with care . . . for all men have one entrance into life, and the like going out." So far, then, we are all alike ; whether kings, priests,

merchants, farmers, labourers, slaves, saints or sinners ; all are born alike, and die after the same fashion : wherein then does the saint differ from the slave of sin ? How does the wise man differ from the fool ? In the free choice which he makes of a portion. For thus the wise man tells of himself : “ Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me ; I called upon God, and the spirit of *wisdom* came to me. . . . I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light : for the light that cometh from her never goeth out . . . for she is a treasure unto men that never faileth ; which they that use become the friends of God For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom.”

And now let us choose out one or two points in which heavenly wisdom differs from earthly, and is superior to it.

There are two more prominent than others. One is the favour of God, which rests upon those who live wisely ; the other is, that the rewards of heavenly wisdom are ever enduring.

Let us dwell awhile upon the latter. The man of this world says, “ Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry ;” but Almighty God answers him,

“Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.” Of what avail, then, is it that men should boast themselves of any good things in this world? what can be more foolish than to say, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,” when any accident may at any moment take away what we trust in? One man boasts of his money; and the failure of his banker may make him miserably poor in a single day. Another boasts of his cleverness and knowledge; and a three days’ fever, or a slight wound on the head, may make him no better than an idiot. Another man boasts of his great strength; and a fall from his horse or a wheel passing over him may make him a cripple for life. The most trifling accident in the world may make a worldly man miserable, whatever his happiness consist in. His life, health, strength, beauty, powers, loves, hopes, are more frail than the flowers of the field: “In the morning it is green and groweth up: in the evening it is cut down, dried up and withered.” It is as if a man had taken possession of an estate one day, who had next day to dispute possession with a number of

other claimants, some one of whom was almost sure to take it from him. No one would dream of calling such a person a rich man! not even his best friends would congratulate him on his possessions. Yet this is no exaggerated type of the man whose portion is in this life. It is not ten or twenty enemies that he has to fear, but ten thousand; each one of whom has power to rob him of his possessions. Yes, he knows it well enough; let his boasting have the very best foundation it can have in this world, and a day's sickness or a fit of low spirits will turn it into shame and confusion.

But are the good things of heavenly wisdom as frail as this? Are they like a mist that melts away before the noontide heat? Is true wisdom like a phantom-light, that vanishes away while we look upon it? No, "she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars: being compared with the light, she is found before it. For after this cometh night, but vice shall not prevail against wisdom." And why are we so sure that the good man's portion cannot be taken from him? Why will it never fade away, but ever grow and brighten? Because the good man's happiness consists in the favour of God. Thus you see those two distinguishing features of heavenly wisdom which I mentioned

blend into one. The light which beams from wisdom never goeth out, and for this reason,—because it is a pure ray from the source of everlasting light. The calm peace, the holy hope, the foretaste of joy, which form the good man's present portion, are as it were the breath of God's favour, ever inspiring him with new and purer life: as when our risen Saviour stood among His twelve disciples and breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and again, "Peace be unto you." This then is why the treasures of wisdom are not fleeting,—they do not depend upon any outward circumstances; they depend upon God. No enemy can take away our birthright from us. While we cling to it, it will stay with us,—through sorrow, through sickness, through pain, through death. For through all these troubles God our Saviour is with us; and in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom. He is the storehouse of our joys and hopes, and the dispenser of them also.—When we lie on the bed of sickness, He stands by us; when friends forsake us, He comes nearer and shews Himself more plainly; and when we are weary and in want, He walks beside us on our lonely path, and makes Himself known in breaking of bread.

And now, my brethren, let us sum up our thoughts to-day in the words of our blessed Saviour; and let us lay them to heart, adopting them as the rule of our lives:—"Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Obedience is the path that leads to perfect wisdom. Happy is he, who finding wisdom, begins to walk her paths; but thrice happy is he who perseveres; for "she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy—for ever—is every one that retaineth her."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

PROV. xi. 12, 13. *He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour : but a man of understanding holdeth his peace. A talebearer revealeth secrets : but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.*

EVERY thoughtful reader of the Book of Proverbs must have been struck with the many precepts which it contains respecting our words and conversation, and the use and sins of the tongue. And at first sight it might appear as if these precepts were put in (as many parts of the Book of Proverbs seem on a first careless glance to be) rather as hints for the wise and prudent conduct of our life, viewed with reference only to this world, than as divine precepts, bearing directly on our duty to God, and on our hopes of eternal life. But a most considerate study of this sacred Book will open to us far deeper and higher views of the real meaning and bearing both of its precepts and its promises ; we shall come to under-

stand that life and death, deliverance, health, the day of wrath, which are so often mentioned, are all to be understood, not of this life and this world only, but of the true life of the soul, here and hereafter, and of the true unseen spiritual world, which are fully revealed to us in the Gospel. The Law was a shadow of good things to come, —and so all that we read of in the Old Testament of this kind, what seem to be threatenings and promises belonging to this life and this world only, are to be understood as figuring those great realities that belong to another.

And the importance of the right use of the tongue, with respect to our highest interest, our spiritual life, and our eternal welfare, is made quite clear in the Gospel. It is very remarkable to observe how the Wisdom of God, speaking through Solomon, uttered truths which the Wisdom of God, even His Eternal Son, expressed more forcibly and decidedly; and so set His seal on the great principle of our being under the most serious responsibility in regard to our words; whilst the Book of Proverbs points out in the most practical and improving way, how we ought to guide ourselves in conversation. It is our Blessed Lord Himself who says, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou

shalt be condemned ;” and, “ Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment.” And His apostle St. James gives this most serious warning, a warning most necessary to all who might regard themselves, or be regarded by others, as religious people : “ If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man’s religion is vain.” Think, my brethren, what it is which these words put before us ; to have to give an account of all our words to the all-searching Judge at the last day, to be acquitted or condemned according to them ; and then, when it is too late to make a change, to find that we have been deceiving ourselves, and that the religion to which we have been trusting, as if we were true children of God and His faithful servants, has been vain, has been a mere shadow and an unreal thing.

If, then, any one would escape this dreadful fall, this self-deceit now and ruin hereafter, let him not pass lightly over the many precepts respecting the tongue, which occur in the sacred book which we read every Sunday as the first lessons at this season. It has been a useful and edifying practice of some pious Christians to read

a verse or two of the Proverbs every day, as a guide to their conduct in the world, and in conversation with others. Let us do so, under a deep sense of the important bearing of its words on our eternal well-being.

It would seem, indeed, as if what is most wanted among Christians generally, is a real sense and consideration of the importance of their words. The common fault amongst those who are at all rightly disposed is simply carelessness and thoughtlessness about their talking. I put aside, of course, such evident sins as swearing, abusive language, unclean words and talking, and the saying what is untrue, knowing it to be untrue. These are so plainly sins, that persons who at all "seem to be religious," unless their consciences are quite darkened, cannot indulge in them without knowing it. What we have need to guard such persons against is carelessness in their talking, which leads them to waste their own time and that of others by mere useless talk, not at all considering that conversation, without being on grave, and what are called religious subjects, may yet be improving, and, it may be, edifying. Or, again, (which is worse than mere waste of time, but is very likely to follow from inconsiderate talking,) the saying things

which you are not sure are true, exaggerating them, representing them unfairly, and in your own way of viewing them ; not as they are really, and as they are seen to be by the eye of Almighty God ; and again, evil-speaking, telling tales, revealing secrets (of which the text speaks), repeating what may be quite true, but what is injurious to others, what hurts their good character, or may make mischief, and separate friends ; all these are faults which people are very apt to fall into almost without knowing it, merely from talking without consideration.

Let a person only remember this before he goes into the company of others, and from time to time when he is in company, or any ways thrown into society and conversation with them ; let him recal to mind some text of Scripture which may make him think that God hears what he is saying, and that all that he says he shall have to give account of. This need not make any one over-scrupulous, or stiff and restrained in society, but only careful to avoid what is wrong, and studious to turn his conversation towards what is good and useful. And there are a few hints which may be of service to any one who wishes to do right in this respect.

The first is, to be occasionally silent ; in order

to check our disposition to be always talking, and to recollect ourselves, that we may not be hurried away by excitement and lose our self-command. Besides, it is well to let others speak, and not to speak ourselves, unless we have something to say which may be useful or pleasing to others. "A man of understanding" (the text says) "holdeth his peace," and there is nothing on the subject of our speech so often repeated in the Book of Proverbs as this, that fools will be always talking, and that the wise man keeps silence. There is a time to keep silence, and there is a time to speak. Indeed, the frequent inculcation of the wisdom of keeping silence, which we find in holy Scripture, is repeated by all those who have thought and written best about the rules of religious life; such, for instance, is the simple advice of Bishop Wilson: "Accustom yourself to silence, if you would learn to govern your tongue."

Another good rule is to be considerate in endeavouring to turn our conversation to useful subjects. Of course one use of conversation is to refresh ourselves, and for relaxation, and therefore it is by no means necessary that we should always be speaking on grave subjects, or such as require much application of mind; but it is quite

easy to talk on points in which we may do good to others or receive good from them, which at the same time it will be a refreshment to us to talk of. It is a great mistake to suppose that religious conversation is conversation on subjects connected with religion. Indeed, very often such conversation is the least religious; if, that is, it should be conducted in a harsh, controversial, contentious spirit; or, again, with any affectation, or putting on a tone and feelings which are not real and genuine. Indeed it is most dangerous to speak on such subjects, lest we speak of them in a wrong disposition, or a wrong time, or when persons are not likely to be the better for them. Our conversation, St. Paul teaches, should be seasoned with a religious spirit, as it were with salt, which affects the whole, but of the presence of which we are scarcely conscious.

But, thirdly, let us lay down this rule strictly, that we avoid what we feel to be wrong in our conversation; whether our conversation be useful to others or not, let us at all events take care that it does them no harm; that it stimulates no evil passions, encourages them in nothing which is wrong in conduct or principle; that it does not tend to set persons at variance with each other, or to hurt the good character of any.

Let us study to speak with meekness and love, to repress all anger and bitterness, to check the expression of anything which we are not sure is true, or which we are not obliged by duty to say, if it be hurtful to any one.

Let us remember the example of Him who spake as never man spake. Let us, while we hear these Lessons read, not pass them over as being less interesting or improving than other parts of holy Scripture; but, considering that they are intended for our guidance in the little details of our ordinary life, let us store them up to be remembered and acted on. Other parts of the Scriptures set before us the high doctrines, the elevated motives, the general rules and principles which ought to guide our conduct, but the Book of Proverbs tells us quite plainly what we ought to do, and what to forbear, each day and hour of our lives.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

DIVINE DELAYS.

ST. MATTHEW ix. 19, 20. *Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His Disciples. And behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment.*

No one perhaps ever read the narrative which forms the subject of this day's Gospel without being struck with the singular manner in which one miracle is made, as it were, to enfold another. No sooner is our attention fully interested on behalf of the Ruler of the Synagogue whose little daughter lay at the point of death, than a fresh history begins,—so affecting in its details, so vivid and striking in the manner of its narration, that we almost forget the errand of mercy on which we were (in thought) engaged. But the thread of the suspended story is resumed by the Evangelist, and duly carried on to its amazing climax,—even the recal of the departed spirit,

and the restoration to perfect health of one who was dead. This probably impresses us the more, because the three first Evangelists conspire in relating the same pair of miracles after exactly the same manner: so that we can never think of the raising of Jairus' daughter without remembering that it was delayed by the healing of the woman with the issue of blood; nor again can we think of that woman's miraculous healing, without remembering that it was a mercy snatched from the great Physician while He was on the way to the House of the Ruler of the Synagogue.

Both miracles then are recorded by three of the Evangelists,—least fully of all by St. Matthew, whose narrative supplies the Gospel for the Day. Let us avail ourselves of the two later Gospels to complete the picture of which St. Matthew supplies only the essential outlines, before we proceed to draw from it the teaching we desire.

When 'behold, there came a man named Jairus, a Ruler of the Synagogue, and fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house,' (as St. Luke relates,)—we are not to suppose, as from our English version of St. Matthew we might have done, that the Ruler's daughter was dead already. The

words 'My daughter is even now dead' can only be supposed to convey the worst apprehensions of the agonized father of the maiden. 'My little daughter lieth *at the point of death*,' is the language which by St. Mark he is related to have used; 'for he had one only daughter,' (adds St. Luke,) 'and she lay a dying.' St. Matthew must therefore be understood to inform us that the father, because he utterly despaired of his child's recovery, as well as because he desired to quicken our Saviour's footsteps towards his dwelling,—declared that '*by this time*' the maiden must be no more. Some delay had inevitably occurred before Jairus could find our Lord; and when he had set out in quest of Him, he already despaired. On entering the Saviour's presence also, there seemed little chance of obtaining prompt attention to his wishes. The Holy One was engaged in discourse with the disciples of St. John Baptist. He was seated. The Twelve were with Him, and a large concourse of persons besides. How could Jairus hope for the immediate and undivided attention which his case seemed so urgently to require? Nevertheless, he fell at the Saviour's feet and besought Him greatly,—explaining the urgency of his need, and imploring Him to come and save the life of

his 'little daughter' who had been dying when he came away from his house, and who must by this time, as he thought, be dead.

All this requires to be carefully borne in mind if we would understand the history before us. There had been *delay*; and from the manner in which Jairus found our Lord occupied, it seemed likely that there would be more delay yet. We learn however that the great Physician at once arose, and followed the unhappy Father. So far therefore he had obtained the utmost realization of his wishes. Christ was already on the way to his house, and probably, in a short time, would actually arrive there.

But the faith of Jairus was destined to be yet further tried, and that severely. The thoroughfare became so thronged with the crowd which attended our Saviour's footsteps, that it was scarcely possible to make any progress. The multitude even pressed upon His sacred Person; so that His inquiry 'Who touched Me?' was treated by St. Peter as altogether unreasonable. 'Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, *Who* touched Me?' . . . The circumstances which had already taken place, as well as the circumstances which followed, we all remember well. There arose a dialogue,

a halt, a turning about to discover the author of the act. This again must have led to sundry questionings and denials ; and occasioned such an interval of continued inquiry as sufficed to convince the afflicted woman who had done this thing that it was impossible for her to keep her secret, and remain concealed. Then followed her memorable confession, and her Benefactor's gracious reply. Who sees not in all this the elements of very considerable delay ? Even had *no* incident happened on the road, (Jairus must have thought,) the Physician would arrive too late. How utterly hopeless then became the case *now* ! *Some* delay was of course inevitable : but there had been superadded the hindrance arising from an immense concourse of persons ; and, as if this had not been enough, a miracle had been performed on the road, of unusual interest and prolixity ! As might have been expected, while the miracle was yet proceeding, ' there came from the Ruler of the Synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead ; why troublest thou the Master any further ? ' The inconvenience to which our Blessed Lord was being exposed seems to have been apparent to all, so as to strike the very messengers who came from the Ruler's house.

St. Mark and St. Luke preserve the affecting

record that our Saviour instantly, even while these men were speaking, addressed a few words of support and encouragement to the distressed parent. 'Fear not: only believe!' It was the act of the same Divine Being who sustained Peter when his faith failed him, and he began to sink. Had there been incomplete Faith on the part of Jairus, the miracle which followed could not have been performed: for no mighty works could our Saviour do where there was unbelief. But the man believed, and he was blessed. He beheld his child awake from the sleep of death, and walk, and partake of food straightway. He was blessed, not only beyond expectation, but beyond anything which he could have asked or thought. He hoped to perceive her slowly amend, but he saw her suddenly made strong: he hoped to witness her recovery from sickness, but he beheld her resurrection from the grave!

Now the only point in all this which we desire on the present occasion to dwell upon for a few moments, is the evidence of Divine Contrivance discoverable in the very delays which occurred, and the abounding love which characterizes the entire dispensation: and further to point out (what is indeed sufficiently obvious) how very unwelcome and inopportune those delays must have appeared at the time.

In truth, it requires but little power of imagination to perceive how agonizing to the heart-broken parent must have been every cause of delay at such a moment. No word of impatience is recorded to have burst from his lips: but he surely must have been ready a hundred times to exclaim with the Nobleman, whose son lay sick in Capernaum,—‘Sir, come down ere my child die!’ Everything seemed to conspire against him. There was a hindrance at every step. At such times how prone are we to heap together words expressive of our impatience and vexation, not to say of our unbelief and displeasure! ‘Unlucky chances,’ and ‘perverse accidents,’ are the names we give to God’s decrees; and we fret and vex ourselves at every adverse occurrence, as if we had really somewhere read in the Bible that all things happen at random, and that there is no God!

And yet, it is manifest that overwhelming Love as well as perfect Wisdom was at work here. The delays—every one of them—came from God. If our Saviour had pleased, He could in the first instance have been found alone,—nay, He could have been met by the anxious Father as he issued from his door in search of Him. How easily might the miracle by the way have

been dispensed with! Why, at all events, halt and investigate the matter? Nay, why perform the journey at all, instead of effecting the miracle at a distance by a single word? Do we ask *Why?* Obviously, in order that in the end Christ might fill the man's cup of bliss the fuller. Because He designed his overwhelming blessedness and his truest good. Because, knowing that 'tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed,'—He saw fit in this case to exercise the man in those Christian graces; and thereby to build him up eternally.

Who sees not that the Faith which brought this Ruler to Christ with the request that He would come and lay His Hand upon his dying child, may not have been strong enough to endure the simple assurance, 'Go thy way, thy child liveth?' It was needful that Christ should submit Himself to his measure, and walk (albeit exposed to the greatest personal inconvenience) by his side; keeping pace with his bodily, as with his spiritual, ability to advance. But even then, the man's faith may have been insufficient. It seems to have required timely aid and support; and this is perhaps the true way of accounting for the miracle of healing which was

wrought by the way. A more precious earnest of our Saviour's power could not have been supplied; nor could it have come at a more opportune moment. The Great Physician was thus healing two persons, (yea, He may have been strengthening hundreds among that crowd!)—but *two* were certainly the special objects of His one act of mercy on this occasion. The woman knew her own blessedness, but the Ruler certainly knew not his. He could have little suspected that it was to sustain *his* Faith, that the miracle was wrought on the woman with an issue of blood: that the delay of the multitude, and the delay of the journey, and the delay of that marvellous cure, were all alike contrived and intended for *him*. Least of all would he have credited the assurance that the death of his child was to be the very instrument of his own abounding bliss!

This single instance of the Divine method will abundantly suffice for our present purpose. We will not ask you to consider how heaven-sent delays, after the self-same gracious pattern, were fruitful in procuring overwhelming blessedness in the case of the Nobleman's son,—whose malady may have been one of the reasons why our Saviour, instead of returning to Capernaum

where the youth lay ill, is found to have come to *Cana*: and again, in the case of Lazarus,—after hearing of whose sickness, our Saviour is related to have ‘abode two days still in the same place where He was.’ These were all Divine delays, and they were after one and the same heavenly pattern. They should each be examined singly, with somewhat the same care as we have already bestowed on the history of the raising of Jairus’ daughter. But they will be found all to agree in respect of their manifest contrivance, and to inculcate the same great lesson; namely, that there was a purpose in them all, and *that* purpose, one of *Love*.

We read the Gospel to little effect if we overlook these lessons; which, though not expressly written on its pages, are yet so clearly deducible from them that a person of the most ordinary ability may discover them for himself. Let us be well persuaded that it is purposely in order to enable us to draw such important inferences for our souls’ health, that Holy Scripture contains so many seemingly unimportant details. Many a slight, and seemingly trivial record of time and season, of age and place, has proved the strong hinge on which it was intended that the doors of eternal Truth should swing open at the

touch of a little child. And truly, it is at our peril that we overlook such blessed guidance as God's Holy Spirit thus affords us, and fail to realize in our own persons the assurance that 'whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for *our* learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.' The heart knows no true peace until it has learned to lean in calm and loving confidence on its Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. It is utter faithlessness to live on, like heathen men, talking of the events of each day's life as if they formed part of no scheme of Divine Providence, but were the blind results of a combination of human chances. When our wishes are thwarted, our hopes disappointed, our plans frustrated, our endeavours unavailing,—let us submit ourselves humbly and cheerfully, even while we labour steadily, and still desire strenuously that our endeavours may yet be crowned with success. The disappointment is Divine, and should not therefore be wholly unwelcome: but what if it be in reality only *a delay*? It would be hard to shew that there ever was real disappointment in the case of a 'good and faithful servant' of 'the Father of mercies and God of all comfort;' provided always that he has remembered to commit his cause to God, and by an act of Prayer

has transferred the matter to Him without whom not a sparrow falls on the ground, and in whose sight the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Yes : be sure the seeming disappointment is almost always a case of delayed fulfilment. And is God unfaithful or untrue if what He denies in Time, He sees fit to grant in Eternity? Did He break His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because in their lifetime He gave them not the Land which He had yet sworn that He would give? He hath as solemnly and far more unconditionally delivered to each of us as large a promise when He says,—‘ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.’ Shall we not trust Him with the fulfilment of His own promises, and believe that ‘ He is faithful that promised ?’

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

THE SECRET WAY OF DEATH.

PROV. xvi. 25. *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

TWICE these words are brought before us: once in the first lesson for the Twenty-fourth, once in that for the Twenty-fifth, Sunday after Trinity; and a very awful warning they convey. They tell us that a man may be walking in the ways of death while he supposes he is in the path of life; may be travelling the broad road, while he congratulates himself that he is in the narrow: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The state of mind they represent is similar to that spoken of by our Lord as the consequence to the proud of His coming in great humility: "I am come," He says, "that they which see might be made blind." The two states of mind are alike, but with this difference, that the blindness of which our Saviour speaks

is more general, that against which the wise man warns us is more special. The Pharisees were blind to the whole meaning of the Christian dispensation, blind to the character of Christ, blind to the source of His power, blind to the meaning of His miracles, blind to the consequences of their unrelenting persecution of God's Holy One; at the same time they were blind to their own state before God: "But now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." It is to this last special blindness, this appalling ignorance of one's own spiritual state, that the wise man alludes when he says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." He warns men against being self-satisfied; he pours in a bright beam of divine truth upon the sloth, indifference, and careless thoughtlessness with which men make themselves easy in a course of life which all who are taught of God see plainly will end in death.

It is an awful thing to lie beneath the wrath of God; and not less so, but more so, if we are satisfied that all is well, and, like the rich man in the parable, take our ease, eat, drink, and are merry, ignorant that when the night cometh our souls will be required of us.

And this consideration renders it even more

awful, viz. that men may be, in their way, religious, and yet equally exposed, nay, perhaps more fatally exposed, to the same danger. There are many such instances of self-deception in the Bible, of which the most remarkable, perhaps, is Balaam's.

He was a man who had by no means cast off the fear of God, nor the desire of a purer happiness than this world can give. He spoke with God in visions and dreams, he heard His voice, he saw His angels, he promised obedience. Even after he had set out on that journey which brought upon him God's heavy displeasure, he professed entire submission: "Now, therefore," he said, "if it displease Thee I will get me back again;" and one of the most touching aspirations ever uttered came from his lips: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." And yet this man, after leading God's people into sin, came to a most miserable end, fighting among the enemies of God, against His people.

And why? Because he tried to serve God and mammon; because he deceived himself, and while in heart and practice he loved the world, in profession, and in allowed intention, he was holding to God. He knew that God's service

was perfect freedom, and he persisted in believing that he was obeying God, and so maintaining his freedom, while he was giving up his members one by one to be bound by the chains of the wicked one.

Jehu is another instance of the same kind. He gave himself up with surprising energy to destroy the worshippers of Baal, but he kept the calves in Dan and Bethel; "Come with me," he exclaimed to the true-hearted Jehonadab, "and see my zeal for the Lord." "But," we are told, "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart."

Or to take an instance from the New Testament. We are told that "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly." But what was his real course of life? He was even then living incestuously with his brother's wife, and he shortly afterwards, at the instigation of his wife, beheaded John in the prison.

But it may be asked, Is such self-deception as possible under the New Testament dispensation as it was among the Israelites, or in the time of John the Baptist? That saying of our Lord's which I have already mentioned may supply the

answer: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." Surely there is the same danger now as ever. Simon the sorcerer believed, and was baptized, and wondered; but at that very moment he let the love of money enter in, to mar his faith, and to rob him of baptismal blessings, yet knew not that he was "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity." St. Peter perceived it, he himself perceived it not.

In trying to bring home the solemn teaching of the text to ourselves, my brethren, I would observe, first, that, awful as it is that men may be thus blinded to their own danger, yet there are those who need not be haunted by a vague, crushing terror lest they should be deceiving themselves. There are those who from their youth up have refused the evil and chosen the good; in whom the good Spirit of God has wrought so calmly and quietly, yet so surely and powerfully, that they have passed almost imperceptibly from grace to grace, and have been formed from their very childhood upwards in the likeness of Christ. If, like David, having yielded themselves to God in their youth, they can say, "I have chosen the way of truth: Thy

judgments have I laid before me ;” then He who has begun in them a good work will carry them safely to the end. If, like Samuel, they have ministered to God in their childhood, and, like the blessed Jesus, have been submissive and obedient to their earthly parents, their Heavenly Father will bless their maturer obedience, and accept their more conscious ministrations. For such as these a state of terror would be as unnatural as it would be unhealthy. The Lord will “keep them secretly in His tabernacle from the strife of tongues,” and although they can point to no one moment in which the whole bent of their lives was changed, they may, without self-deception, believe that they are in the narrow way ; only they must beware of that hard, selfish, faithless spirit, which would lead them to look coldly and doubtingly on their penitent brother.

Nor, again, must we so interpret Scripture as to exclude the broken-hearted prodigal from resting in his Father’s arms when they are thrown around him. God graciously receives the true penitent, heals his backslidings, and loves him freely. (Hos. xiv. 2, 4.) He binds up the heart which He has broken, heals where He has wounded, and consoles by His Holy Spirit the humble mourners.

Yet there certainly are those among us who are in the state described by the wise man; their way of life seemeth right unto them, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

No two persons, I suppose, reach this state by precisely the same course; yet it is not attained by any excepting through wilful transgression at some period of their lives.

Let us trace the course which seems to be the most usual. We see many children, sometimes the children of religious parents, wayward and wilful, or indolent, negligent, and heedless. They go on from day to day in an indifferent sort of life, neither good nor bad, yet taking no real, earnest pains either to learn their duties or to improve in temper and manner. Conscience does, I believe, more or less, condemn a child for such a course of life; yet childhood is not the time for self-contemplation, and as a careless life continues, the reproaches of conscience are less severely felt. All this may go on with much occasional amiability; there may be a generally easy temper, and a benevolent disposition. But youth succeeds to childhood, and with it come temptations of a new character, and of greater intensity. Bad companions obtain influence, pleasures, seeming fair and beautiful, entice and

allure the opening imagination, and strange longings for the forbidden fruit are felt. The flesh and the fancy combine to give temptation force, and because no sound religious principles have been formed and strengthened in childhood, the unhappy youth falls into sins which pollute the heart, defile that body which was the temple of the Holy Spirit, and enfeeble the will, if any will for good be left. The sore punishment of keen anguish will soon follow. Conscience will be heard, and sometimes it is not heard in vain; and the first real misery of life is the beginning of a true conversion to God. But too often the anguish hardens rather than softens the heart; the sin is repeated, the first bitter sense of misery wears off. In due time the temptations are withdrawn; the wild young man comes to be settled down in life, is married, and reforms; becomes fond of home, takes a respectable position in the world, is congratulated by his friends on his surprising improvement, and considered all that he ought to be. Nay, more; he congratulates himself on his reformation, and wonders at his former life, soon learning to condemn in others what he once practised with greediness himself.

But what is the real state of such a man? He has not repented, he is not really changed,

he has no deep hatred of the sins which once enthralled him; he has never confessed them heartily, nor humbled himself before God because of them.

If so, the burden of guilt lies heavily upon him, but custom has deadened his sensibilities, and he seems to walk uprightly, unconscious of the load of sin which is crushing his moral being. He may be regular at church, and exemplary in many of his relative duties; he may be considered by others, and may consider himself, a religious man.

Yet such a man, impenitent as he is, unhumiliated, self-satisfied, is, I believe, exactly the person referred to in the text. His way of life is the one described by the wise man: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

For consider again what his condition really is. He has no *love*; the life of religion, therefore, is not in him; his heart is hard and unmoved; he has no sorrow for his sins; he does not know what sin is; since he has never learned to hate his own sin, he has no dread of the power of sin; since he has never truly condemned sin in himself, he cannot understand the confession, "miserable sinners," nor join sincerely in the

prayer, "O save me for Thy mercy's sake." He has no real faith in the sacrifice of Christ, no true love for Him whose love he has never realized. The cross and the crown of thorns, the anguish and the groans of Christ, do not move him; the day and the hour of Christ's sufferings are to him the same as other days and hours; the holy week, that time of awe, when the soul of the Lord Jesus lay under the deep shadow of God's wrath; the Friday which we all call good, because the sacrifice was then completed; the solemn eve when Jesus lay dead,—all pass him by, and scarcely leave a trace upon him. Such is the impenitent, yet self-complacent man, at his best estate. But no man can remain such as I have described. If he does not grow better he must grow worse. Let us trace his probable course a little further. Cold-heartedness towards God and the Lord Jesus Christ grows upon him; a worldly spirit creeps over him, and wraps him round more closely in its coils; he becomes less kind, more selfish, more grasping; floating on the world's surface without anchor, chart, or helm, he is more and more wafted by its gales, and drawn in by its currents, he gradually nears the vortex of some new and grievous sin, so gradually that he is unconscious of his danger until the

waves have sucked him in, and he is lost for ever.

I have described one course of life, and shewn its end. No two courses, I have said, are exactly alike; but this one, which many will feel to be, alas! too frequent, may serve to shew the principle of self-deception, and may prove a warning against a danger to which we are all exposed.

But there is another way of viewing the danger, which may help some of us to see it while escape is possible. Let us take the case of two sins which widely prevail among us, and yet, perhaps because they are so common, seem to bring no troubled and anxious thoughts to those who commit them. We shall thus see that the danger of self-deception is no imaginary one. I mean the love of money in men, the love of fine dress in women.

“The love of money,” the apostle tells us, “is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” But few will acknowledge, even to themselves, a *love* of money; let us then take the expression of the preceding verse, “They that *will be* rich (i. e. they that wish to be rich,) fall into a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which

drown men in destruction and perdition." Perhaps you have considered that the sin of covetousness was one which only beset rich men; but think how many who are poor *would* be rich if they could; how many wish and long to be richer than they are. The apostle does but say, "They that *will be* rich," that is, they that desire to be rich; yet how many, all around us, have no better hope in this world, no stronger or more earnest desire, than to become richer than they are at present, being unconscious all the while that they are in any danger. They walk a path which seemeth right unto them, nor ever dream that the end thereof are the ways of death.

Again, St. Paul desires "that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." And St. Peter in like manner: "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." And yet how almost universally we see persons of every rank in life dressing above their station, putting on gay or-

naments and gorgeous attire, apparently for the very purpose of drawing upon themselves the eyes of men, and making their frail bodies objects of admiration. And all this appears to take place without a thought of the sin they are committing in thus despising the warnings of holy Scripture, making idols of their own bodies, turning away their thoughts from those things which are pure, and lovely, and of good report, and drawing down their minds from all high, noble, and heavenly aims, not to mention those more awful sins to which the love of dress too often leads.

Here, then, are two sins ruling widely, and bringing men and women under their dominion; sins of which they appear to be quite unconscious. And these are only two out of the many sins which are little thought of by those who commit them.

In conclusion, I must say a few words on the means of guarding against the awful danger of self-deception. It is something to be warned. The danger is in some measure provided against when we know that it exists. Secret sins lose their character of secrecy when they are made known. Still we must remember that it is one thing to know that there are secret sins, another to know which are those that most easily beset us.

Our only true safeguard is careful self-examination, with earnest prayer that God would search us, try us, examine our thoughts, and, when He has set our misdeeds before us, lead us in the way everlasting. Not to do this, not to try ourselves, not to pray for light from heaven to aid us in our search, is to shut our eyes wilfully upon our true state; it is to resign ourselves to the dominion of secret sins; it is to walk by choice along that way which, seeming right unto a man, ends in the ways of death.

Balaam could not have been what he was if he had thus questioned himself, as in the presence of God. We cannot walk the secret way of death if we honestly follow the apostle's counsel: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." God will not suffer us to be deceived if we seek the light with a single eye.

O then, my brethren, let me earnestly beseech you to examine the course of each day when you come to kneel down before God in the evening; call to mind your deeds, your words, your thoughts, and pass them in judgment before your conscience, (enlightened by God's Spirit,) before they have faded from your memory, remembering the gracious promise, that if we would judge

ourselves we should not be judged of the Lord.
(1 Cor. xi. 31.)

Try once a-week, say on each Friday, to take a more general view of your whole way of life, how you are progressing in holiness, or whether sin is regaining its dominion ; and seal the good resolutions then made in the holy services of the Lord's Day.

And let none be satisfied to examine himself merely as to grosser sins, which cannot escape observation. Rather let us guard against the more subtile forms of declension ; a constant falling short of the measure of our duties, the doing some things gladly, and neglecting others equally important, but more distasteful. If we find in our self-review that we pray only by fits and starts, make resolutions and then give them up, begin good works and gradually weary of them, struggle for a little time against infirmities and then for a long time allow them to have their own way, we may be sure that we are in great danger of walking the secret way of death. O let us earnestly pray, "Cleanse Thou me from my secret faults," while we strive in the strength of that prayer to bring them forth from their hiding-places that we may slay them. Let us strive, because our Heavenly Teacher bids us

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate;” let us pray, because there is One only who can draw forth the dark hidden mass of evil from our hearts and display it before us, as we are able to bear the sight; One only who can infuse into us godly sorrow, and such love and tenderness that we repent with a true, hearty, and lasting repentance, not to be repented of. Only let us not fear to submit ourselves to His probing hand, severe while it is tender; severe according to our needs, tender as our wayward hearts will suffer it to be.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

ST. JOHN vi. 12. *Gather up the fragments that remain,
that nothing be lost.*

WE are come to the end of the Christian year. We have travelled over one more of the long miles of this our earthly journey. Thus far the Lord hath helped us. It is the last Sunday after Trinity. Let us for a moment stop, and look around us and behind us: what wonderful and cheering scenes we have passed by! We can recall the recollection of the light of heaven shining down on earth at Christmas, the far-seen beauty of the star of Epiphany, the keen yet bracing airs of Lent, the noontide darkness of Good Friday, the glowing rising of the sun at Easter, the opening of the skies at Ascension, the rushing mighty wind at Whitsunday; and we remember the Sunday after Sunday, all through Trinity, which rose and set, each one throwing a

new light upon our path of charity and duty, each one bringing with it an unceasing warning, a charge always varying, and yet the same—"This is the way ; walk ye in it." And we recollect, too, other days, brighter than common ; brighter because they brought to us happy thoughts of those who had once been travellers like ourselves on the wayside of the world, but who now have ended their journey, and have entered into the fulness of their rest. We are now come to the last of these ; and this Sunday, too, has its message for us, which we shall do well to listen to.

To the eye of him who is seeking for and journeying toward his home, those holy scenes are ever changing, though they are ever the same. Each year brings them to him, and each year changes them too. Even if the wayfarer of the world call not for them, yet they come ; if he wish them away, yet they are there. And as they come oftener and oftener, if he again and again slights them, and passes them heedless by, their beauty grows dim, and their aspect alters ; there falls over them a shade of sorrow, and something of terror comes almost imperceptibly to mingle with their warning light ; until at last, when for the last time the careless and unbelieving pilgrim looks back upon his darkening path, their once

mild and cheering brightness gleams rather like the distant fearfulness of a consuming fire. Far otherwise have they been, and will they always be, to them who love them, and dwell upon them, and rejoice in their gentle shining : each year such a traveller has passed them by, their clear calm glory has fallen with intenser fulness around his steps, and their influence has more deeply soothed his soul. They indeed stood still ; while he saw them in the distance, came up to them, welcomed them and passed them by, each time with a more joyful heart, because they more plainly told him what he already rejoiced to know, that he was hastening on to where "signs and seasons, and days and years" shall cease for ever, and time for him should be no more.

If we have forgotten so far then, my Christian brothers, these calm and holy warnings, yet let us, at least on this the last Sunday in our year, do so no longer, but rather follow the lesson it reads us, and "gather up the fragments that remain," that all be not entirely lost. Let us learn what we can from this day's solemn teaching.

There is always something that is melancholy about the past. We can scarcely ever look back without a sigh. All that has happened to us

through the year that is gone by,—and *all* that has happened has had some bearing or other upon our spiritual state,—comes before us at such a time as this ; and whether it was at the time connected in our minds with either joy or pain, it now comes before us necessarily tinged with something of sorrowful regret. However and whatever may have been the year that is gone, now that it is gone, the recollection of it brings with it a sort of saddening weariness, a sinking of heart, a feeling of despondency, because it might have been so very otherwise. So many good deeds which have been left undone, so great and so high rewards which have been left uncared for and well-nigh lost, in the year that is past, must, when we think of them, make the heart feel weary, and the spirit feeble. Memory brings regret, and regret brings despondency. Like the foot-racer of old in the double race felt his nerves strung and his pulse beat high while the first goal was full before him, but when that was turned and out of sight, and all the long course was to be measured back again, the inevitable fatigue came over him, and his spirits flagged, and his courage drooped within him ; so he who has to run the Christian race cannot but feel at such a time as this, anxious

and desponding at the thought of how little he yet has done, how much he has still to do. Well then does the Church do now to bid him turn with trusting hope to his Almighty Lord, and beseech Him, who can, to "stir up the wills of His faithful people, that they bringing forth more plenteously for the time to come the fruit of good works, may of Him be plenteously rewarded." And if he so pray, He "who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think," will with His own almighty grace comfort the failing heart and sustain the feeble knees, and make His strength perfect in our weariness and weakness.

Yet not only do we want help in our own timidity, and confidence against our own weakness. There are other sources of doubt, and of trouble too, in the world around us. How many miserable sights and hearings have grated upon our souls during this last past year. What have we not seen, and what do we not know at this very time, of terrible unrighteousness and wrong! What crime, what sin, what neglect for what is good, what contempt of God's law, what despite to the Spirit of Grace, is there not thick around us everywhere! and everywhere sin is so usual, so utterly common, that it excites no surprise, and

calls for no condemnation. Sin is putting on its most dreadful form, that form in which it is as if it were not. It is not noticed as sin. In the country cottages of the poor, in the handsome dwellings of the rich, in the crowded haunts of towns, among the wretched and the self-indulgent, among the old and the young, the ignorant and the well-instructed, there are many and fearful sins ; sins of the heart, of the lip, of the hand ; sins of evil example, sins of reckless selfishness, sins of despair ; so frequent, so dark, so unrepented of, that it makes the heart shiver when it thinks that they are now brought one year nearer to judgment. To those who would be faithful, and especially to those who would be faithful in poverty and in want, there are many temptations to doubt, many discouragements in this sad and evil time. It seems as if a few more years might pass, and the Church of Christ might fail ; it seems, if we look at the world about us, as if the gates of hell must finally prevail against her ; it seems as if, ere long, holiness would be lost indeed, and the world would soon be utterly given up to itself, and forgotten by its God. To those who are thus fearful-hearted, to-day brings another message quite. It bids us know and learn that each year, as it rolls by, works

right out of wrong ; that a better time is in store in the eternal decrees of God ; that the days are coming fast when “ a King shall reign and prosper ” as Lord of the peoples of the world, and shall in His own almightiness “ execute judgment and justice on the earth.” Then shall there be no more untruth, no more oppression, no more unfairness, no more divisions ; what is right shall be everywhere established, what is wrong shall be everywhere condemned. In His days the wanderers shall be brought home, and the parted joined, the spiritual “ Judah shall be saved,” and the Israel of God “ shall dwell safely ; and this is His Name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.” He shall reign, who shall comfort the souls of the poor, who shall destroy all falsehood and wrong, who shall justify His elect ; He shall reign in holiness, in goodness, and in truth, and the kingdoms of the world shall be altogether His, who is “ The Lord our Righteousness.”

Thus has the Church to-day given us several messages ; a message of living earnest faith in the Collect, a message of glowing, holy hope in the Epistle, while she reserves her dearest message of all, her message of love, to proceed in the Gospel from the own lips of her Lord and Spouse.

Let us see what it is, gathering it up with care and treasuring it with heed, so that not one fragment of it be lost.

We have, without any figure or parable, "come from far," and have far to go. Our journey through this wilderness of mortal things is a long one and a weary. He, who hath travelled it before, whose feet have measured each step of the most toilsome road, and who Himself, "being wearied with His journey," aforetime sat down thus by the well of Jacob, knoweth that, unless our hungering, thirsting souls have whereon to feed, we must needs "faint by the way." No labours of our own can win us strength, and help, and peace; no price of this world would be sufficient to purchase that much of comfort for us, that "every one of us might take a little." Man cannot aid us. He Himself alone knoweth, now as of old, "what he would do." He, therefore, now as of old, biddeth those who have come to Him to sit down in the green and quiet resting-places, to which, even in the wilderness, He leads His own, to sit down each in their own companies, though all the multitude are one; and then He takes into His hands the bread of earth, and blesses it and breaks it, and it becomes under His creating power the bread of heaven; and He

giveth it unto His ministers, and His ministers "to them that are set down." And so their longing hearts are stayed, their weary souls are "strengthened and refreshed," and they eat and are filled with the food of life. The bread of angels is made the meat of the wayfarers. And not they only, but others too. There "remains over and above unto them that have eaten:" basketsfull of fragments yet are left out of the abundance, in which He "will satisfy the hungry with good things." Oh, if there are any who travail with sorrow for their own unworthiness, if there are any who are heavy laden with the burden of their sins, if there are any ready to faint by the way by reason of their feeble and dead-hearted faith, if there are any who are poor, in need, in want, let them linger not, but in eager thankfulness even now "gather up the fragments that remain" of the eucharistic feast, "that nothing, not even themselves, be lost!" It is not His will that any should perish for lacking of "the bread of life." He will ever feed those who "come unto Him" with that bread, of which, "if any man eat he shall live for ever: and the bread that He giveth is His flesh, which He hath given for the life of the world." So shall the wills of the faint-hearted be stirred

up, and the spirits of the weary be refreshed with that bread which is "meat indeed;" and the wayfarers shall thereafter go on their way unto their home, having seen the grace, more strange than any miracle, which Jesus hath wrought out for them.

Thus then, my brothers, while all is changing, while we ourselves are changing, let us stay our souls on that which alone abideth, unchanged and unchangeable, our Saviour's immortal love. Year after year is passing on; our probation-time is dwindling to its end; how much will yet be left to us we know not; and therefore the Church, our mother, at this solemn tide bids us, with her Saviour's voice, to "gather up the fragments that remain." She, like her Lord, would have nothing lost. She would have us gather up the memories of what is gone, not as lifeless relics of the past, but as living earnest of the future. She would have us do as she now doth, look forward, rather than backward; not spend our hours in vain regrets, or sorrowful musings, but strive the more that our wills may be stirred up, and our hopes may be raised higher and be made more intense, and that so with swifter feet, with more enduring courage, "we may run the race that is set before us;" look-

ing not so much to our own shortcomings as to "the prize of our high calling;" bending our eyes not on the transitory things around us, the sins and the sorrows of this vain and evil world, but on the coming kingdom of "the Lord our Righteousness." If we thus do our part, she will do hers. She will go ever calmly on with her unending round of quiet, holy seasons; comforting the penitent and cheering the weary, and distributing to all of the bread of life, until the last Sunday of the world's last year shall come, and the Advent be near indeed.

Let us fully enter into her spirit and her meaning. If the calm recollection of the holy seasons gone can soothe us, encourage us, stir us up, surely there lie untold, un hoped for stores of comfort and of joy in their coming for the future. If we have numbered the days that are past, so as to apply our hearts indeed unto that wisdom which can make us wise unto salvation, still more heedfully shall we number them that are to come, until their tale be ended, and there dawn for us the days of eternity, which none can number. If we have, in humble yet adoring faith, duly "gathered up the fragments that remain" from the abounding banquet of our Redeemer's love, as each eucharistic feast was

spread before us, and we were bidden to partake thereof, we shall go on our way, like the Ethiopian, rejoicing, though the road be the one called "desert;" until we come to our home so long prepared, and to the Saviour so long expecting us, and be "made to sit down" at the marriage Supper of the Lamb; through that last high and holy feast-day which Christ Himself shall consecrate by His appearing, and whose only evening shall be eternity.



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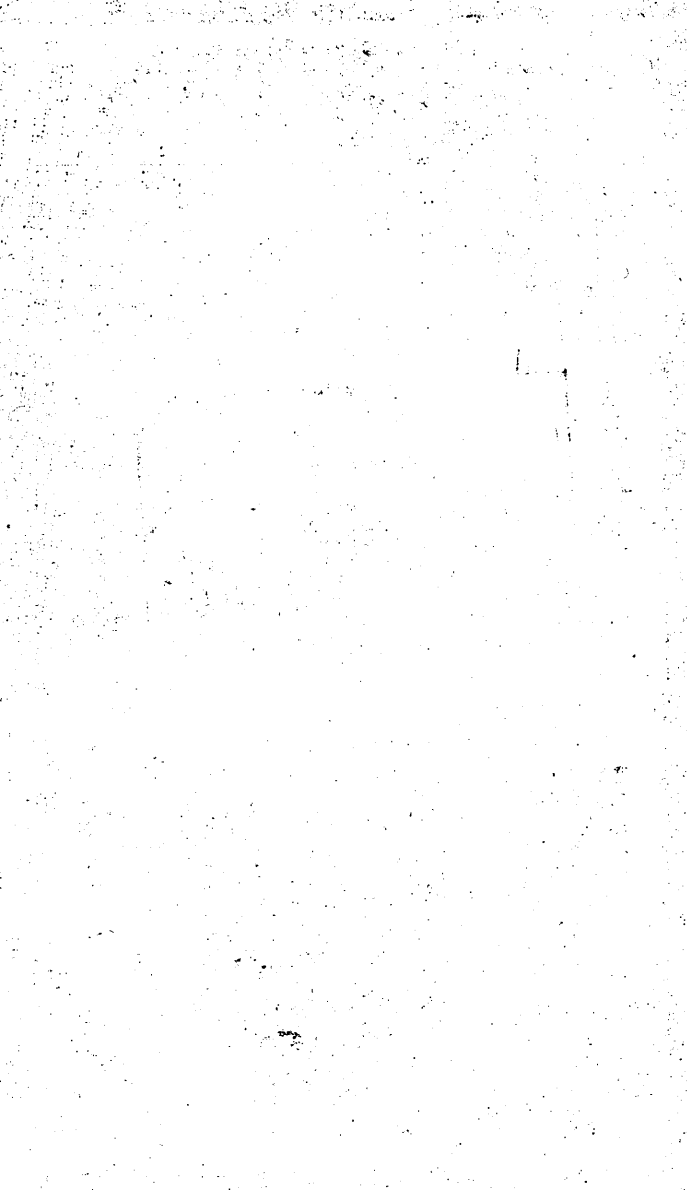
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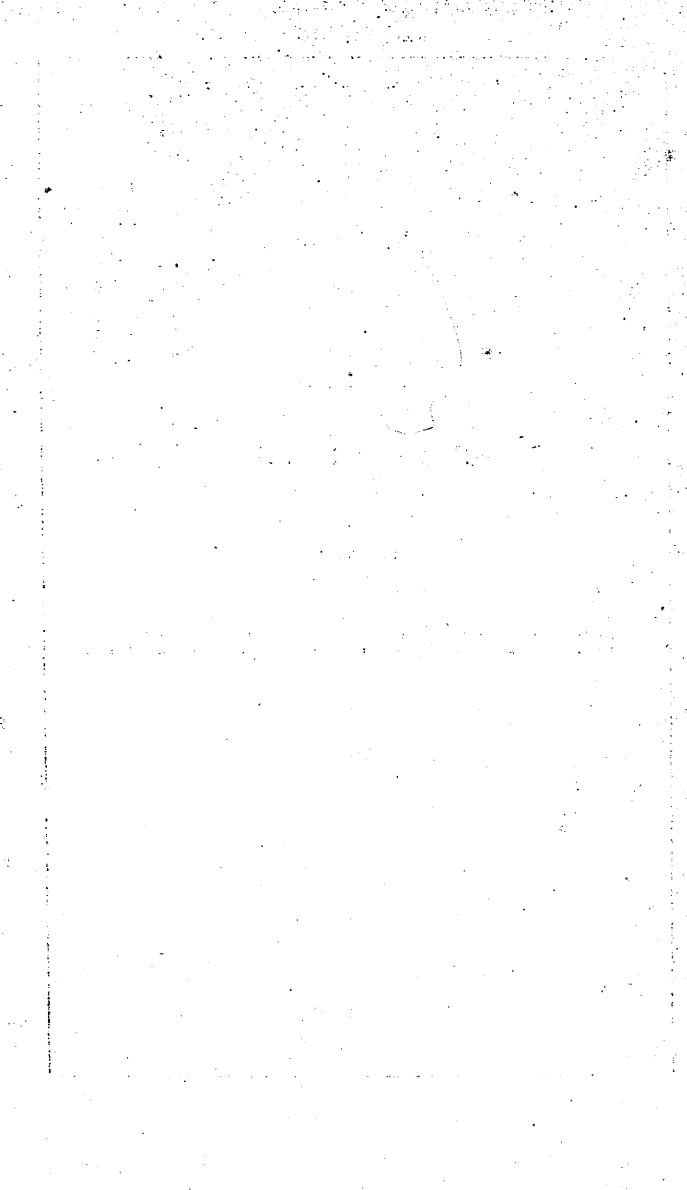


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Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. ANDREW.

BRINGING OUR BRETHREN TO CHRIST.

ST. JOHN i. 40. *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*

THE year of the Church, the Christian year, begins on the first Sunday in Advent; and the solemn order of the Church's festivals begins with this festival of St. Andrew the Apostle.

St. Andrew would seem to have been the first disciple who came to Christ, and so his festival stands first in the order of the Church.

And here it may not be out of place to say a few words on the use and comfort which such holy days may be to us. They remind us of that article of our Christian faith, 'the Communion of Saints;' they remind us that we are of the same household and family of God, of which the faithful departed also are members; they set

forth the power of God's grace made perfect in man's weakness. The saints of God, whose names and days we keep in memory and honour, are our brethren in Jesus Christ: sustained by the same grace of God, nourished by the same sacraments. They, indeed, have finished their course, have won their crown, have entered into their rest: and we have still our race to run, our crown to win: we are still set in the midst of trials, dangers, enemies, all around us. Still it is full of peace and comfort to look back to God's saints of old, to meditate on their faith, and love, and holiness, to gain strength to do and to suffer God's will from the records of their lives and of their deaths. No doubt there is but one all-perfect pattern, the Son of God made man; still, in their measure, His saints also are patterns for us, patterns unto which we shall do well to conform ourselves, even as they sought to be conformed unto Him, that so we may be followers of them, even as they were followers of Christ.

Thus, then, of how manifold uses may these holy days be to us, if they lead us to meditate upon God and the unseen world; if they withdraw us from the cares and pleasures and business of every-day life, and touch us with a sense of the power of God's grace, and of the holiness unto

which, with His help, His saints have attained even in this life.

Much more could be said on this matter ; but this may be enough to suggest what reason we have to bless God for the ordinance of holy days, set apart and consecrated to the remembrance of His saints and servants.

Now to speak of the holy apostle whom we have in memory to-day.

St. Andrew was a native of Bethsaida, a town of Galilee, on the banks of the Lake of Genesareth, the son of Jonas, a fisherman of that town, and the brother of Simon Peter. He had been a disciple of St. John the Baptist, who, in his case as in that of others, had prepared the way of the Lord by the preaching of repentance. And the occasion of the first coming of St. Andrew to Christ, was the witness which St. John the Baptist bore to Christ. Thus we read in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, from which the text is taken ; " Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples ; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God ! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye ? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say,

being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day : for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother."

The preaching of St. John the Baptist, it would seem, had already called him to repentance ; and true repentance had brought with it a deep sense of sin, and an earnest desire of forgiveness, and so the words, "Behold the Lamb of God," the true sacrifice for sin, (of which the lamb of the daily morning and evening sacrifice was but a type and figure,) at once spake to his heart. Many may have heard St. John's words before ; but the same words do not speak to all alike ; words, ever so solemn, ever so touching, ever so serious, do but move us in proportion as our hearts are opened to receive them. St. Andrew had, doubtless, learned from St. John the Baptist to look to another, not to St. John, for remission of sins ; and when He came, it needed not many words to point Him out to a watchful and earnest mind. And so St. Andrew won this especial blessing, that he was the first out of the whole race of mankind, who came to Christ.

But it was not enough to St. Andrew that he had

himself found the Christ ; his first act after he had found Him and had been taught by Him, was to bring to Christ the brother whom he loved. “ He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.” And so it will ever be. They who have found the Christ themselves will seek to bring their brethren also to Him ; they who have known the blessings of a religious life will seek to lead others, and chiefly their own kindred, to live religious lives also : humbly, quietly, patiently, they will seek to lead them to the knowledge and obedience of that God whom they serve and obey. If they are parents and masters they will seek to do this by teaching and discipline ; and, even where they have no claim to instruct or guide others, who are as old, or older than themselves, still they may do much, by God’s grace, (and yet not leave their proper place, nor offend against Christian modesty and humility,) by the quiet influence of good example, by setting forth in their lives the peaceable fruits of the faith which is in their hearts.

After St. Andrew had thus come to Christ himself, and had also brought St. Peter to Him, both he and his brother appear, as we gather from

the Gospels, to have returned for a time to their usual occupation as fishers; the time not being *yet* come that Christ called them to become His constant followers. The occasion on which Christ thus called them has been already read to you in this day's Gospel. "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they, straightway, left their nets, and followed Him. It was not then from any unwillingness to follow Christ at the first, that they had returned to their daily tasks. They had but returned to them until such time as He should be pleased to call them to be His more immediate disciples. For when He said unto them "Follow Me," they, straightway, left their nets, and followed Him. He had but to speak the word, and they, at once, obeyed; no worldly care or thought kept them back, even for a moment. And thus they were afterwards advanced to the high place of Christ's apostles, to be of that glorious company of whom Christ spake, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." And then was fulfilled to St. Andrew and his brother what Christ had said to

them, when He called them, "I will make you fishers of men." For this world is as a sea, (as our Lord Himself teaches,) and the men in the world are as fishes: and the kingdom of heaven, i.e. the Church, is as a net cast into the sea, and they who, at the first, cast the net into the sea, (i.e. gathered men from out of the world into the Church,) were the holy apostles, as now the bishops and priests of Christ's Church; and, as the net gathered of every kind, so are there in the Church good and bad; and will continue so until the judgment-day,—when the net shall be drawn to the shore, and the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. May we give good heed to make our calling and election sure; remembering the solemn truth, "Many are called, few chosen."

The other notices which we have of St. Andrew in the Gospels are as follows. It was in the house of St. Peter and St. Andrew at Capernaum that our Lord healed the mother-in-law of St. Peter of a fever: it was St. Andrew who, when our Lord fed five thousand men in the wilderness, spake of the five barley loaves, and two small fishes, which our Lord made use of in the miracle. "One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto Him, There is a lad here who hath five

barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?"

It is not so easy to say in what spirit St. Andrew spake this; the question, "but what are they among so many?" might seem to imply doubt, or distrust; and yet that he should refer to the "five barley loaves and two small fishes" at all, as being in any sense or way a supply for so many, would seem to denote *some* faith (however faint and unformed) in our Lord's more than human power. If St. Andrew had learned the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, he might have read in them a like miracle wrought by Elisha, (a special type of Christ, even as Elijah was a special type of St. John Baptist,) and thus might have had hope (however undefined and vague) that Christ by His power might do even yet more than Elisha had done.

Again, we find that when, on the occasion of our Lord's last entry into Jerusalem, "certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast, came to Philip, . . and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus, Philip (we read) cometh and telleth Andrew; and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus." St. Philip was of the same city, Bethsaida, as St. Andrew;

hence, probably, their names are often joined together; still the fact that St. Philip applied first to Andrew, before he applied to Christ, would seem to mark that St. Andrew had been admitted to a nearer approach to Christ than some others. - And the same would seem to be the case from what we read in St. Mark's Gospel; our Lord had spoken of the coming desolation of the holy temple, "and as He sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, asked Him privately, Tell us when shall these things be?"—where St. Andrew is joined with the three apostles who most certainly were admitted to a nearer approach to Christ.

After our Lord's ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the holy apostles were scattered far and wide throughout the whole earth. St. Andrew is said to have preached the Gospel chiefly in Scythia, i. e. in the parts of Europe and Asia north of the Black Sea, where is now the empire of Russia. After having preached and founded churches in this and other countries, St. Andrew is said to have suffered martyrdom at Patræ in Achaia, in Greece. Thus we read in a writer of early Church history, that as he endeavoured to convert the pro-

consul of Achaia, and to preserve his new converts from apostasy, he enraged the proconsul against him, who commanded him to be scourged, and then to be crucified: and, that his death might be more lingering, he was fastened to the cross, which was of that form which has since borne his name, not with nails, but with cords. Thus was St. Andrew a martyr for Christ, a witness in his death for that holy Gospel which he had preached in his life.

Holy and blessed is the memory of all God's saints and servants, who have departed this life in His true faith and fear, and specially holy and blessed is the memory of the apostles of Jesus Christ.

They were His true and faithful followers when He was upon earth, in the days of His flesh, chosen and called and sent by Jesus Christ Himself to preach His blessed Gospel, to be the foundation stones upon which His holy Church was to be builded; and much more, when He had been taken from them, and when the Holy Spirit had descended upon them on the day of Pentecost, were they His faithful witnesses unto all men; "their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world."

Thus, as the holy days come round to us which bear their names, they remind us of God's grace shewn forth in them, they remind us of the spiritual blessings which we have received from God through their means; and they teach us, each its lesson of Christian duty, they set forth, each its pattern of Christian holiness.

Now if we are to seek in St. Andrew, as in the other apostles, for some especial lesson, it would seem to be this; by all means in our power, and in all ways suited to our age and station, to seek to benefit the souls of others, especially of those who are near of kin to us. But to do this with Christian humility, distrust of ourselves, earnest prayer for a lowly and gentle spirit; and to remember that we can teach aright *that only* which we have ourselves learned; that we can point out to others *that only* which we have ourselves found; to remember that personal holiness, obedience, consistent piety, are necessary to all, and especially to those who would seek to lead even the youngest and weakest to Christ.

And surely this is a most necessary lesson, or, rather, a most necessary warning, for us all: for we are all only too much tempted to put other

matters before personal holiness and obedience, whereas God has given unto these the first place. We must be watchful over our hearts and over our lives, that so our words may win others to the faith of Christ, for thus only will our words reach the hearts of those with whom we are living. We must be diligent and careful in our prayers, not only that God may forgive us our sins, and visit us with His blessing, but also that He may hear us, when we intercede for others, and may bless and prosper such efforts for their good as He shall enable us by His grace to make.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. THOMAS.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF FAITH.

ST. JOHN XX. 29. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.*

IN order to assist you in turning to good account this holy day, I will proceed to put together such notices of St. Thomas as we have in Holy Scripture, adding such other circumstances as we learn from early writers, of his life, preaching, and death; and will then speak of what is the chief lesson which we are to learn from this day's festival.

We know nothing from Holy Scripture of the parentage or place of abode of St. Thomas. His other name, Didymus, means in Greek a twin; which is also the meaning, in Hebrew, of the name Thomas. Neither do we know when or how he was called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. There is one notice of him in chap. xi. of St. John's Gospel, which would seem to shew that (whatever may have been his weakness of faith afterwards) he was yet altogether sincere

and earnest in his love for his Divine Master. When our Lord, after the death of Lazarus, willed to return into Judæa, and the other disciples warned Him against the danger to His life, St. Thomas spake out like a true and faithful servant. "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

Again, in chap. xiv. of St. John's Gospel, in our Lord's discourse with His disciples on the night before He suffered, we read of a question put to Him by St. Thomas which seems to shew a mind slow to believe. Our Lord had spoken to His disciples words of comfort: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Upon this "Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" It becomes us to speak with all reverence of an apostle; still (seeing that St. Thomas did afterwards so fail in faith as to incur our Lord's

rebuke) we may, without irreverence, trace in this question of his the very same slowness and dulness of heart to believe what he had been so often taught by Christ Himself. But, in this as in other cases, the good providence of God so ordered it as to make the slow and doubtful temper of St. Thomas an occasion of a great and solemn truth being recorded for the teaching of the Church in all ages. To the question of St. Thomas our Lord made this reply, (setting forth in few words the sum of Christian faith); "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

The other, and that the most important, notice of St. Thomas is that which has been read as this day's Gospel, and from which the text is taken. In St. John's Gospel, chap. xx. ver. 19, we read of the first appearance of our Lord to His disciples, on the evening of the very day on which He rose again from the dead. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them

His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. . . . But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe. And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

After our Lord's ascension into heaven, St. Thomas is said to have preached the Gospel in Parthia and in India, and there are still in the latter country (India) churches which profess to have received the Christian faith and to have been founded by St. Thomas. Like his brethren,

the apostles, he is also said to have died a martyr; a witness to Christ in his death, even as he had preached Christ in his life.

What then is the chief lesson which we are to learn from this festival? Surely it is none other than that is contained in the words of the text, "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." They are chiefly blessed, who, with simple and child-like hearts, believe, although they have not seen. In this (as in all other things) the spirit of the world and the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are contrary the one to the other. The world counts it wisdom and prudence to doubt, to hesitate, to withhold assent, to require a *full* proof; the world will not believe so long as there exists a chance that it may be deceived: even in the things of God and of another world it counts it better and wiser to believe too little than to believe too much; as if it were better and wiser and more reverent to reject what, *after all*, may be God's own truth, God's own revelation, than to receive that as God's, which, in the end, shall prove to be man's; as if, of two extremes, what men call superstition were a worse evil than unbelief itself:

as if Holy Scripture were full of promises to a hard and cold and unloving temper; and not rather full of promises and comfort to a humble, ready, unquestioning faith, which looks abroad out of itself for the signs and tokens of God's presence; in every sound it hears listens for God's voice; in every thing it sees traces some impress of His divine perfections. Surely it is the privilege, no less than the duty of the Christian, to walk by faith and not by sight, to see Him that is invisible, to feel after Him, and to find Him. Serious persons, who have made the Holy Scriptures their study, would do well to consider whether the whole tone and tenor of Holy Scripture be not in favour of such a spirit of simple, confiding faith. Almighty God, in His holy Gospel, has called us to be His sons in Jesus Christ; sons, no more servants; and is it not the place and duty of sons to be very watchful and jealous, that they suffer not any of the will of their Father to escape them? Shall they do nothing, shall they believe nothing, but what they see, and know, and are assured, is from their Father, by such proofs as cannot possibly fail, and as must sway all persons alike? Surely not:—far other was the faith of the early Church, far other the faith of the first believers;

and far other must our faith also be, if we would, like them, attain unto a knowledge of God and of heavenly things. Had Almighty God so willed it, had it been good for us, He might have made all His revelations to man so clear, and confirmed by so strong witness and proof, that no man in his senses would have doubted of them. But Almighty God has seen fit to do otherwise. *Why* He has done so, we do not fully know; yet this we know, that thereby they become a test and trial and proof of our moral nature, of our heart, affections, feelings, conscience. They who are of a humble, gentle, teachable temper, (such a temper as is formed by self-denial and distrust of self,) will at once receive them as from God: whereas the evidence that they are from God will be hidden to men of a contrary temper and life.—Even as it was in our Lord's parables; to the many (of careless or worldly lives) they were but as dark sayings: their sense and meaning hidden: whereas they were full of divine wisdom to the meek and loving. And this takes in a larger scope than persons usually think. Not only do persons by unbelief cut themselves off from all saving knowledge of Christ, but (as a general law) they who believe most know most; they who believe

least know least.—Alas, how much do men lose of what should be their blessedness and privilege! Although the prophets had foretold that Christ should suffer, and that He should rise again: although our Lord had Himself warned His disciples that He should suffer, and encouraged them with the assurance that He should rise again from the dead: although St. Thomas had with his own eyes seen our Lord's miracles, the sick healed, the evil spirits cast out, the winds and sea calmed with a word, nay, the very dead raised again: although they who witnessed to him that they had seen the Lord were his brethren, whose faith and honesty he could not question; still St. Thomas preferred to doubt; nay, (instead of submitting to receive such evidence of the resurrection as God should see fit to vouchsafe,) he rashly and presumptuously desired to fix what was the alone evidence on which he would believe; "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." It was indeed a dangerous and perilous thing to reject all evidence, save that which fell in with his own views. But our merciful Saviour, who

reads the heart, saw in His servant Thomas something that was better than his rash words; He gave to him that evidence which he required, but He so gave it as to shew both to him and to the Church in all ages, that it had been better for him not to have asked or received that evidence: that it had been better for him to have received the truth on the witness of others.

By demanding evidence other than what God had vouchsafed to him; by choosing "sight" rather than "faith," St. Thomas lost a higher blessing, to which he might otherwise have attained. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Few of us, possibly, but at one time or other of our lives have had the wish pass through our minds that we had lived in our Lord's days, had seen His miracles, and those of His apostles; had heard His teaching, and that of His apostles. At times, when our faith seems weak, or when doubts are raised which we cannot solve, or when hard questions of doctrine are discussed, such would seem to be almost an instinctive wish.—Now, of course, we all allow that what God has ordered for us, is better than what we could order for ourselves; that He knows best in what state of-life, in what country, in what age, it were best for us to be born and live;—but do

we realize, and bear in mind, that there is a sense in which they "who have not seen" are more blessed (if only they believe) than they who have seen; that, if they truly believe in Christ and obey Him, the lot of the men of this day is therein blessed, that "they have not seen and yet have believed." And (even where, by God's grace, the evil habit of this day, to doubt and question, has not extended to the great saving truths of the Gospel, those articles of the Christian faith, without a belief in which we cannot be Christians) still how much does this unhappy temper and spirit keep from us: how many high and holy truths, which Almighty God proposes to faith, and which faith alone can apprehend! The frame of mind (which men have been taught to think safe and wise) is far other than what befits weak, and fallen, and sinful, and ignorant creatures, listening for the voice of their Creator, that they may hear it and obey it. Men seem to think that *probable* evidence, such as guides them in every-day life, has nothing to do in religion; men are every day obliged to believe things which they cannot be *sure* are true; to do things which they cannot be *sure* are for their interest: i. e. men are obliged to "walk by faith not by sight" in the things of this world: or else they must believe

and do nothing; and yet men refuse to receive the same kind of evidence, to walk by the same rule, in the things of religion: i.e. in the things of Almighty God, eternity, heaven, hell, the world of spirits. Whereas, even in the things of this life, they have no choice but to believe many things which they cannot see, they refuse to do so in the things of another life. We know that there are evil and reprobate men who deny the very being and providence of Almighty God because they see Him not; "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Again there are others who deny the "Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God," because, as they say, it is against their reason; and so men, rather than believe too much, fall into the sin of blaspheming their God and Saviour. But I do not wish to speak of these any further than by way of warning. The spirit in such men is but the spirit of this age, the spirit of unbelief, in its worst form; and the spirit of this age has entered into the Church, and into the hearts and thoughts of us all, far more, I fear, than we are any of us aware: men think it enough answer to make to any doctrine (however sacred), that it *may* be untrue. The apostolical succession of ministers in the Church may have failed in the course of ages: *therefore*

(say such men) the doctrine is not true; such is the conclusion which the spirit of the age draws. They who have been baptized in infancy grow up, to all outward appearance, the same as those who have not been baptized; therefore (say such men) there is no inward and spiritual grace in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism: and the language which even serious persons allow themselves to use of the other blessed Sacrament is even yet more painfully irreverent. God, by His grace, may keep them from carrying out these principles to their full and fatal issue: yet surely it is not to be said from how many great and holy truths they thus cut themselves off; great and holy truths which are revealed to *faith*, and are the reward of *faith*. When persons, judging from what they see, or what they think agreeable to reason, go on to deny or question the plain words of our Saviour Christ, the plain teaching of His Church from the beginning, surely they need to be reminded, if not of the great danger which they incur, yet of the blessedness which they thus lose. "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

MARTYRDOM.

ACTS vii. 59, 60. *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

THERE follow upon Christmas-day *three* festivals, that of St. Stephen, that of St. John the apostle and evangelist, and that of the holy Innocents; wherein, it is thought, the Church commemorates the *three* kinds of martyrdom: that in will *and* in deed, as was the martyrdom of St. Stephen, where persons are willing to suffer death for the sake of Christ, and do actually suffer it: that in will, *but not* in deed, as was the martyrdom of St. John, where persons are willing to suffer, prepared to follow their Lord to death, but are not called by God to do so: that in deed *but not* in will, as was the martyrdom of the holy Innocents, where persons are *actually* put to death, but from their being in-

fants, or from some other cause, have no *opportunity* of exercising a willingness to suffer: whereof the first, that in will *and* in deed, as that of St. Stephen, is the highest.

And, surely, it is not without deep meaning that these festivals follow so close upon the great festival of Christmas: to chasten and sober our joy; to bid us rejoice as Christians, remembering that our profession calls us to be witnesses for Christ, in our lives, and (if need be) in our deaths; that trial and persecution have been, in all ages, the lot of God's saints, the portion of His true Church and people: and that, if we weigh things aright, "there should be no greater comfort to Christian persons than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, troubles, and sicknesses. For He Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; He entered not into His glory before He was crucified; so truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter into eternal life, is gladly to die with Christ: that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life."

St. Stephen was by birth a Jew, and is thought to have been one of the seventy disciples; at least, he is said to have been so by early writers;

and the fact, that he was chosen to be one of the seven deacons; and, chiefly, that he had attained unto such a full knowledge of Christ, would seem to make this very probable.

The origin of the office of deacons in the Church was as follows. At the first, we read, that in the Church, "All that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." After a time, "when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, (i. e. of the foreign Jews, against the native Jews) because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. "Then the twelve (apostles) called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason, that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte

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of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles ; and, when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." This was the origin of the order of deacons in the Church of Christ. They were ordained by the apostles, by prayer and laying on of hands, to minister to them, as the Levites under the law ministered to the priests. The immediate occasion of their ordination was, that they might assist to distribute the alms of the faithful among the needy brethren ; but this was not all, they had power also to baptize, as we read afterwards in the instance of Philip ; and to preach, as we read in the instances, both of Philip and (in this very chapter) of St. Stephen. And such are still the chief duties in the Church of the order of deacons, to visit and relieve the poor out of the alms of the Church, to minister to the priest, and in the absence of the priest to preach and to baptize.

This is the first notice which we have in holy Scripture of St. Stephen. Afterwards we read, that "the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied . . . greatly And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." For the spread of the Gospel, and for the confirmation of them who believed, Almighty God was pleased

to grant unto St. Stephen the power to work miracles. Next we read, "Then there arose certain . . . disputing with Stephen, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake." And so to him was fulfilled our Lord's promise to His disciples, "*I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.*" The Spirit by which St. Stephen spake was no other than the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and so they were not able to resist it. Then his enemies, moved with hatred, brought false witnesses against St. Stephen, even as they had brought false witnesses against our Lord. "Then they suborned men, which said, we have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council; and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." And here Almighty God was pleased to work a miracle, and to change the very countenance of

of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles ; and, when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." This was the origin of the order of deacons in the Church of Christ. They were ordained by the apostles, by prayer and laying on of hands, to minister to them, as the Levites under the law ministered to the priests. The immediate occasion of their ordination was, that they might assist to distribute the alms of the faithful among the needy brethren ; but this was not all, they had power also to baptize, as we read afterwards in the instance of Philip ; and to preach, as we read in the instances, both of Philip and (in this very chapter) of St. Stephen. And such are still the chief duties in the Church of the order of deacons, to visit and relieve the poor out of the alms of the Church, to minister to the priest, and in the absence of the priest to preach and to baptize.

This is the first notice which we have in holy Scripture of St. Stephen. Afterwards we read, that "the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied . . . greatly And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." For the spread of the Gospel, and for the confirmation of them who believed, Almighty God was pleased

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St. Stephen, (in some such way, perhaps, as the face of Moses had been glorified when he came down from the mount); "And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." "Then said the high priest, "Are these things so?" And, upon this, St. Stephen entered upon his defence: teaching them, out of their own holy Scriptures, that Almighty God had loved their fathers; and had called them, and chosen them to be His people; and had delivered them from their enemies; before either the law had been given, or the temple had been builded: and warning them how their fathers had rejected God's prophets; had refused to receive and to obey even Moses; had resisted the Holy Ghost; had persecuted and slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom they had been even the betrayers and murderers. But this discourse of St. Stephen, which *should* have moved them to repentance, did but provoke their malice yet further: they were set not to believe, and so they hated him who warned them of their sin and unbelief. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, (with rage, not with repentance,) and they gnashed on him with their teeth." And now Almighty God

was pleased to reveal unto His martyr St. Stephen the very form and presence of His Saviour in heaven. "And he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." These words did but further increase their rage against him, and make them more eager to put St. Stephen to death as a blasphemer. "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Such was the peaceful, and blessed, and glorious death of St. Stephen, the first martyr: the first in the Church of Jesus Christ, who was called to seal with his blood his witness to the Gospel which he preached. Almighty God revealed to him at his dying hour the vision of his Saviour in heaven. Into that Saviour's hands he com-

mended his spirit ; and, after that Saviour's example, his last prayer was for his enemies and murderers. " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

" Blessed are the dead, which (thus) die in the Lord from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them."

Blessed are " the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."

And, surely, we have a *practical* lesson to learn from the sufferings and deaths of the martyrs. There have been times, when they who would be true and faithful to God, had to suffer sharp and cruel persecutions. In the early Church of Jesus Christ, for a period of three hundred years, the disciples of our Lord had no other choice than either to deny Christ, and offer sacrifice unto idols, or to suffer, at the hands of the heathen, all that the malice of man and of Satan could devise ; many died at the stake, many on the rack, many were cast to the wild beasts ; and, of them who died not, many were scourged and tortured, many were imprisoned in loathsome dungeons, or sentenced to labour in the mines ; many again were banished from their homes, and

lived and died in foreign and barbarous countries, among strangers and enemies, enduring hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness, all their lives through. Such was the state of the early Church, such the trials of the early Christians ; trials hard to flesh and blood, but such as, by God's grace, they overcame ; nay, trials, whereby their faith was exercised and perfected, and they fitted and prepared for a brighter crown, a higher place in the kingdom of heaven.

And even now, in heathen lands, the Christian missionary and the Christian convert, may be, and at times are, called to undergo the same fiery trial ; even now, no one year, perhaps, passes, but that some in heathen lands may be called to seal with their blood their witness for Christ. Through the alone mercy of God, we have been spared this trial of our faith. Martyrdom is what we read of, or hear of, not what we are called to witness with our own eyes, still less to undergo in our own persons.

Almighty God hath cast our lot in quiet and ordered times. We are, not *now* called to suffer persecution for the name of Jesus Christ. We are not *now* called to bear harm or loss rather than deny the faith ; still we may, at any time, be put to lesser trials of our faith and

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duty: and how great would be the sin and shame to fail in these, whereas the noble army of martyrs failed *not* under so far greater and heavier trials. We may be called on to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ in our daily life, in our daily business, at home, or abroad. We may be called to give up gains, such as are not strictly honest, to incur losses rather than risk a good conscience. We may have friends or kindred who would tempt us to sin, and we may love them, and yet be called, and bound, to give them up; or we may live and mix with persons who mock at purity and religion, who would laugh us out of our innocence, laugh us into sin. Alas, there are many such around us, and the young may be sorely tried—when they wish to keep holy the Lord's day, when they wish to come to the church, when they do not wish to mix in rude sports on God's own day, or to speak light, or profane, or unclean words:—the young may be sorely tried, when they wish to be pure, and dutiful, and religious, and are mocked at, and laughed to scorn by those of their own age. But they must not faint, nor give over: so far as God calls any to suffer for Him, be it shame, or mockery, or what it will, so far God calls them

to be in a measure His martyrs : in a mean and poor way, perhaps, as compared with such as resisted even unto blood ; still to be His martyrs, i. e. His witnesses : witnesses for God, for duty, for purity of speech and life, for religion, for reverence for God's house and for God's holy day. Unto all this God calls any who are set upon by evil scorn, or mocked at, when they would do their duty, follow conscience, and keep from sin : and let such take comfort and courage from the thought that God has given unto His servants grace and strength to overcome trials ten-fold harder. God has helped His servants at all times, and will continue to help them. No trial so great but that He will give them strength to bear it ; no trial so small as to be beneath His regard and care. His eye, that neither slumbers nor sleeps, is upon them ; *all* that they do and suffer, they do and suffer in His sight ; *all* is laid up with Him, as treasure in heaven ; *all* He will reward and crown at His coming.

Blessed are they that, in any age of the Church, in any country, in any the least measure, are called to be martyrs, witnesses for God and His truth : if only, that is, they be faithful, and true to God, and obey His call : blessed indeed are they, for our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself hath

called them blessed, and they have His own sure word, His own gracious promise to rest upon ; “ Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Sermons for the Christian Seasons,

ST. JOHN'S DAY.

THE APOSTLE OF LOVE.

ST. JOHN xxi. 24. *This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things.*

YESTERDAY was the festival of the first martyr, St. Stephen, a martyr both in will and in deed: to-day is the festival of St. John the apostle and evangelist, a martyr for Christ in will, yet not in deed.

St. John was by birth a native of Galilee, son of Zebedee and Salome, and brother of St. James: both the brothers, as well as their father Zebedee, were fishers, when our Lord called them to be His disciples, as we read in St. Matthew's gospel. "And going on from thence, Jesus saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them: and they immediately left the ship and their father and fol-

called them blessed, and they have His own sure word, His own gracious promise to rest upon ; “ Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

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lowed Him." St. John is usually thought to have been the youngest of the apostles, and to have been not yet thirty years old, when our Lord called him ; which is very probable, as he did not die until seventy years after our Lord's crucifixion.

St. John had many singular marks of our Lord's love and confidence ; he was allowed, together with St. Peter and St. James, to be present both at our Lord's transfiguration, and also at His agony in the garden. He received from our Lord, together with St. James, the name of Boanerges, i. e. sons of thunder : which has been thought to refer to the sublime doctrines which he preached ; the sound whereof went out into the lands like the awful sound of the thunder, rather than the mere voice of man. But, beside this name which he had in common with His brother St. James, and the privilege of being with Christ on the mount, and in the garden, St. John had other and especial marks of the favour of Jesus Christ, in which no other shared. He is called (in an especial sense) the disciple whom Jesus loved, and he lay on Jesus' breast at the last supper. And it was to his care that our Saviour, from His cross, entrusted His holy and virgin mother. "When Jesus

therefore saw His mother and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Highly favoured indeed was he, who was thus left in Christ's place, to His blessed mother; to be as a son to her, to whom the Son of God Himself had been a Son. What higher mark of love and of confidence could one human friend shew to another; how much more when He, who thus shewed it, was that very God who knoweth the heart.

Of his great zeal for Christ there are two well-known notices in the gospel, wherein our Lord restrained him; as though his zeal and jealousy for his Lord were not as yet enough chastened by knowledge and charity: one, where he saw one casting out devils in Christ's name, and forbade him, because he followed not the apostles: the other, where, when a village of the Samaritans did not receive Christ, St. John and his brother said, "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" And the like may be said of our Lord's reply to the request of St. John and St. James, "Grant unto

us that we may sit the one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left hand in Thy kingdom;" to which our Lord made answer, "Ye know not what ye ask."

Although, when our Lord was betrayed, all forsook Him and fled, and St. John among the rest, still his love seems to have soon overcome his fear: he is usually thought to be that other disciple, "who was known unto the high-priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high-priest, and brought in Peter." Certainly he was present at His crucifixion, (regardless it should seem of any danger to himself,) and close at the very foot of His cross, whence also he received in charge the blessed Virgin. He is again spoken of as "that other disciple," to whom, together with St. Peter, Mary Magdalene brought word that the body of Christ was not in the sepulchre; and he and St. Peter ran together to the sepulchre, to see with their own eyes the truth of what she said.

After our Lord's ascension, St. John is again joined with St. Peter, as healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, as preaching unto the people, as witnessing Jesus Christ before the council, and as sent, together with St. Peter, to confirm the Christian converts in Samaria. And

this last is the last notice of St. John which we have in holy Scripture, except what is contained in the book of the Revelation.

As you very well know, St. John was an evangelist as well as an apostle, i. e. was the writer of the gospel which bears his name: which, (as it was written many years later than the other gospels, and after that grievous heresies had sprung up to trouble the Church,) so is it, in an especial sense, full of divine doctrines, so much so that it was called in the early Church the Spiritual Gospel. Whereas the other evangelists had spoken chiefly of the human nature of Jesus Christ, St. John spake chiefly of His divine nature: whereas they had spoken of His birth as the Son of man, St. John spake of His eternal generation, as the Only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds. Whereas the other evangelists had written chiefly of His miracles, St. John writes chiefly of His discourses: and so of other things, whereas they had written chiefly of the words of the ordinance of the outward and visible sign of the sacraments, St. John writes solely of the inward and spiritual grace; the being born again of water and of the Spirit in holy Baptism; the eating the

Flesh and drinking the Blood of Jesus Christ in holy Communion.

Beside the gospel, St. John was the writer also of three general epistles, and of the most awful and mysterious book of the Revelation, with which the volume and canon of holy Scripture closes.

The notices of St. John in early Christian writers are not few, and are full of the deepest interest; they set before us the same character, as we gather it from the notices in the gospels, and from his own epistles: the same mixture of love and sternness; love for God and love for man, such as became the disciple whom Jesus loved; and with it a severe and stern and holy jealousy for God's truth; so much indeed is this the case in his epistles, that they, (the epistles of him who said, "God is love,") have in them, one may almost say, the most severe and awful rebukes of the sin of heresy and false doctrine which are to be found in holy Scripture.

After our Lord's ascension St. John is said to have continued some years in Jerusalem; he is then said to have preached the gospel in Parthia; but the chief sphere of his apostleship was the Lesser Asia, and especially Ephesus, and the

countries round about. In the second general persecution of the Christians, under Domitian the Roman emperor, St. John was sent as prisoner to Rome, where he was cast into a caldron of boiling oil, but was, by special miracle, preserved alive. It is with reference to this especially that St. John is called a martyr, i. e. a martyr in will, although not in deed; Almighty God being pleased to prolong his life to extreme old age, as the last of the glorious company of the Apostles. St. John was upon this banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he saw the visions of which we read in the book of the Revelation. He afterwards returned to Ephesus, where he wrote his gospel against the blasphemous heresies which had grown up; and probably also, his epistles.

St. Polycarp (who was a disciple of St. John, and ordained by him bishop of Smyrna, and who was also a martyr) relates that, on one occasion, when St. John was about to enter into a bath, seeing Cerinthus there, (who was the chief teacher of the heretical and blasphemous doctrine which denied the Godhead of Jesus Christ,) St. John started back, and said, "Let us, my brethren, make haste and depart, lest the bath, wherein is Cerinthus the enemy of

the truth, should fall upon our heads ;” which quite agrees with what we read in St. John’s epistles : “ Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ ? ” “ He is anti-christ that denieth the Father and the Son.” “ Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God ; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed : for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.” And as this sets forth the zeal of St. John for the truth, so do the other notices of him set forth his fervent love. An early Christian writer says, “ that when St. John was returned from his exile in Patmos to Ephesus, he visited the neighbouring Churches, and observing in one of the cities a certain young man, he commended him, in the presence of the Church, to the care of the bishop of the place ; who, taking the charge of him, instructed him and baptized him ; at length the bishop giving the young man his liberty, he fell into evil company, and joined himself to men, not only otherwise of evil and corrupt lives, but who were robbers ; and became their

captain, and led them in all their acts of murder and robbery. Some time after, St. John came to the city, and enquired for the young man. The bishop with concern replied, that he was dead, (meaning that he was dead to God,) and was joined to a band of robbers. Upon which, St. John took a horse and guides, came to the place where the robbers were, and being seized by their sentinels, he desired to be brought to their captain, who, when he saw him, fled through shame: but St. John pursued him, desiring him not to fly, and promising him pardon from Christ, by whom he said he was sent; upon this he stayed, and in the greatest distress threw down his arms, and embracing the apostle, he groaned, and shed many tears. Upon which St. John, assuring him of pardon, prayed for him, and brought him back to the Church." Another early Christian writer says, "That when age and weakness grew upon St. John at Ephesus, so that he was no longer able to preach, or to make long discourses to the people, he used always to be carried to the assemblies of the faithful by his disciples, with great difficulty; and every time said to his flock only these words: 'My dear children, love one another.' When his hearers, wearied with hearing always

the same thing, asked him why he always repeated the same words, he answered, 'Because it is the precept of the Lord, and if you comply with it, you do enough.' An answer," says the same writer, "worthy of St. John, the beloved disciple of Christ, and which ought to be engraven in characters of gold ; or rather, written in the heart of every Christian." St. John died in peace, and in extreme old age, at Ephesus, at the end of the first century after Christ.

Now, no doubt there are many lessons which we may learn from the many notices of St. John in holy Scripture and early Church writers : no doubt there were in him many singular Christian graces, which we should do well to imitate, so far as, with God's help, we are able. But there is one special lesson to be learned from St. John, which is very necessary at this day ; it is this : to join together Christian love and charity with earnest zeal for the faith, and holy jealousy for God's truth ; we must learn from St. John so to love them that are in religious error or heresy, as that we hate the error and heresy itself : so to hate religious error and heresy, as that we yet love the persons of such as hold and even teach it : we must not fall away into a harsh and uncharitable spirit and temper, under the cloke of

zeal for God's truth; nor again, must we, as we value our own and others' souls, make charity, falsely so called, an excuse for indifference to religious error; and herein lies our difficulty; and herein also lies our duty, the strait and narrow path wherein God would have us to walk, turning aside neither to the right hand nor to the left. Natural disposition may lead one man to what looks like Christian charity, another to what looks like Christian zeal for the truth; but it is not natural disposition, but God's grace, and watchfulness on our part, which alone can combine both in us, and make us at once full of love and full of zeal; full of love of the brethren, full of zeal for God, and for righteousness, and for truth. Now this is what we all at this day need; and, in order to this, we must exercise much watchfulness and self-control over our hearts and over our feelings, so that they neither be hardened into a cold, and dead, and barren profession of the faith, nor pass into a vain and unreal softness, such as shrinks from the duty of witnessing for God's truth, and withstanding error; because to do so is painful and distasteful.

Alas, how often what is called charity is merely indolence, and fastidiousness, and a faith-

less shrinking from duty ; we will not allow that we have a duty to discharge in this matter, and so we make fair names to clothe our sloth and indifference : we seek our own ease : we seek to spare ourselves distress, and pain, and labour : and we call this Christian charity, Christian love. Brethren, this is no such love as the love of the beloved disciple, St. John ; no such love as that wherewith he loved his divine Master ; no such love as that wherewith he has bidden us to love one another. True love of the brethren, based upon true love of God, will make us very watchful to do what in us lies to lead them unto the truth : we shall not leave them in error, as if we were not our brother's keeper ; but having a deep sense of the awful worth and blessedness of God's truth, and of the loss and danger of all religious error, we shall act in a spirit of faith, and both out of zeal and reverence for God, and out of real tenderness for the souls of our brethren, we shall witness for God's truth, for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints, in no harsh or angry spirit, yet with seriousness, with gravity, with constancy.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

INNOCENTS' DAY.

INFANT MARTYRS.

ST. MATT. ii. 17, 18. *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*

TO-DAY is the last of the three festivals which follow on Christmas-day, the festival of the Holy Innocents: not, as St. Stephen, martyrs for Christ in will and in deed; not, as St. John, martyrs in will, although not in deed: but martyrs for Christ in deed, (as the Church hath ever held,) although not of age to be martyrs for Christ in will. These first specimens of the innumerable army of martyrs, springing up like the earliest blossoms in the cold and dark winter, would seem to betoken the rich abundance of sufferers for the sake of Christ who were to follow: and the class whom they especially represent, those who suffer in deed but not in will,

is very numerous in every persecution: children like themselves,—persons who are put to death without the possibility of escape,—thousands slain in indiscriminate massacres, who are accepted by Christ as having died for His sake, though they had only, it may be, the general disposition to give themselves up to God, and to do what was right, and suffer in doing it. It may be as well to go through such portions of the Gospel of St. Matthew as give the occasion and cause of their martyrdom. “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.” And this the enquiry of the wise men, or magi, came to the ears of Herod, a cruel and remorseless tyrant, who had already, from jealousy and distrust, shed the blood of the wife of his bosom, and of two of his own sons. “When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief-priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they answered, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel." So clearly had the words of the prophet Micah fixed the place wherein the Messiah should be born. And upon this Herod took false and crafty counsel against the Lord and against His Anointed: he had zeal on his lips, but hate in his heart: he professed to seek to worship, in truth he sought but to slay. "Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also." Surely there is no sight, on this side of the grave, more awful than that of a bad man making religion a cloak for his sinful purposes. Such was Herod, weakly and wickedly thinking by human craft or human power to set aside the eternal purpose of Almighty God, to frustrate *that* which a long line of God's prophets had borne witness to, and the earnest expectation of the faithful in all ages had looked for. "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw

in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." Thus did Almighty God by miracle guide them who sought their infant Saviour with true and faithful hearts. "And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." And as God had thus revealed to them His Son, so did He forbid them to make Him known unto Herod. "And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." And Almighty God straightway withdrew from the power of Herod Him whom he sought to slay. Doubtless Almighty God (had He so thought fit) might, by a word, have restrained the rage of the king; but God was pleased in this, as in other of His purposes, to work by human means. And the rage of Herod, which sought to frustrate the prophecies which went before of Christ, did but cause them to be brought to pass, even in the very letter. "And when they were departed, behold, the angel of

the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him. Then he arose, and took the young child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son." Thus God withdrew from the jealous wrath of Herod the *one* object of his fear; and the deed of cruelty which followed was as vain as it was wanton. In the words of this day's gospel, "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." So great was the wailing of the bereaved mothers, when this cruel order took

effect, that *now* was fulfilled wholly, what had been but in part fulfilled in the times of the captivity. Rama was a village in the tribe of Benjamin (the son of Rachel), not far from Bethlehem, and, as the massacre extended not only to Bethlehem, but also to the coasts thereof, it may have extended even to Rama, and so Rachel might well be said to weep for her own children, thus cruelly slain in the city near which her own body was buried; and, as she had been a type of the sorrowing Hebrew mothers in the times of the captivity, so might she well be a type of the sorrow of the bereaved mothers now, upon whom the blow must have fallen alike sudden and unexpected. They wept for their children thus cut off by the sword in their very sight, and they wept with natural sorrow, such as God pardons, and man may not condemn. And yet, so far as they wept for their children, their tears had no just cause: God took them unto Himself, and so took them away from the evil to come; before they could know actual sin, He set His seal upon them as His own, holy and blessed, albeit all-unconscious, martyrs for His Son. How happy such a death, to die for Christ, and in the place of Christ, even when yet too young to know Christ, or to call

upon His Name. They were not of age to confess Christ, yet they were of age to die for Christ. And the same merciful Saviour who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven: and He took them up in His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them:" the same, we may not doubt, received and blessed these His first martyrs, "embraced them with the arms of His mercy, gave unto them the blessing of eternal life, and made them partakers of His everlasting kingdom." Even as in the latter days of His ministry He despised not, He rejected not the witness of the "children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David," yea, rather, He blessed it, and sanctioned it, and pointed to it, as the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." He unto whom "all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein," He unto whom "cherubim and seraphim continually do cry," He put not from Him the lisping voice, the broken words of childhood: how then may we not much more believe that He regarded with His special and tender love the sufferings of infants, called by His providence and grace,

although not by their own will, to suffer for Him and in His place? Surely their lot was indeed blessed, to be thus early sealed as Christ's, "redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb." Might not the words of the prophet which follow be applied to the weeping mothers, in their highest sense? "Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord: and they shall come again from the hand of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

And so it is in very many, if not all, of the dispensations of God; we know not (we *cannot* know) what is good for ourselves and others. And chiefly is this true of health and sickness, of life and death. Our times are in God's hand, and it is best for us that they should be in God's hand. We sorrow when the young die, as if their early death were untimely; not remembering how little there is in human life to satisfy the soul of man, how much, it may be, to corrupt and harden the heart. Surely we may, in faith, be thankful, when God grants a long life; and, in faith, be no less thankful when God sees fit to cut it short. If our children are already, by

holy baptism, "members of Christ, children of God," surely, whatever trial it may be to us, to *them* it is a blessed exchange to be taken from an evil world, from sin and sorrow; to be with Christ, to be safe under the shadow of their heavenly Father, to be already entered into their rest, within the limits of that kingdom of heaven, whereunto the grace of God hath called them, to be heirs with Christ.

And may we not also from this day's festival, learn something of our duty towards our children, (so many of us as are parents or teachers,) in bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? If God may require them so soon, so early, at our hands, (and who shall say how soon the call may come to any of us?) how careful ought we to be, how watchful, from earliest childhood, to check and restrain what is evil, to foster and cherish what is good. Remember that in the youngest baptized child there are two principles at war, the Holy Spirit of God and man's corrupt nature. From the first hour that the child can will, or think, or know what is right and what is wrong, the trial begins, on the issue of which depends the child's eternal state, the weal or woe of the child's undying soul. And when

God removes any from life, even a child, we may be sure that the trial is over; the trial of life over for ever, when (it may be) but a few short years have passed. Therefore, to as many as are parents I say, (as in God's sight,) look not to the future, build not upon the future, for your child, any more than for yourself; you know that it is sin and madness in your own case to put off repentance, faith, obedience, to a future day, which *may* never come; surely it is not less sin and madness to do so in the case of your child; to risk his soul is not less sin and madness than to risk your own. Why should a Christian child (with God's Holy Spirit within him, brought up under Christian parents, and in a Christian family, and within the secure fold of the Christian Church) ever so fail of God's grace as to fall into grievous sins, such as mar baptismal purity, and darken and embitter after years? Why should not the course of Christian children be such as that, by God's help, they "shall go from strength to strength, until before the God of Gods appeareth every one of them in Zion?" The fault is with us. We are content with a low standard of holiness and obedience. We do not propose to ourselves, and so we dare not propose to our children, such patterns of holiness and obedi-

ence from childhood upwards as holy Scripture furnishes. We do not call them to be such as was Samuel, such as was Timothy. We think it a great thing if, after careless and worldly lives, (not to say *sinful* lives,) men turn to God and repent ; but we know so little of this other and better state (of childhood and youth dedicated to God's service and spent in God's fear), that we fail to propose it as a pattern to our children, because we have not proved it ourselves. And yet, (not to speak here of how few persons turn to God in earnest, and repent effectually, in manhood and old age,) how do we know that our children will ever attain unto either manhood or old age ? God may take them from us at *any* time, (the very young die hardly less frequently than men of mature years ;) and if they shall at the hour of death be found unprepared, after their measure, for the change, shall we be altogether free from sin ? will not God require at our hands their blood ? at our hands, to whose charge, as parents and teachers, He has entrusted these, the lambs of His flock.

Surely ours is a very solemn and awful, as well as a precious and holy charge ; so far as we may, to keep the young from pollution and defilement of sin : to reverence in them, and to

teach them to reverence, the seal of Christ, the power and presence of His Holy Spirit: to suffer no stain of evil to mar the whiteness of their baptism-robe of righteousness: but to guard them jealously and tenderly from all that may lead them astray from the ways of holiness and of God: this is our charge: and blessed are we, and blessed are our children also, if, with God's help, we perform it: for early piety, early purity, early religion, has a freshness and grace, such as usually no change of after life can attain unto: has promises of peace and quietness such as may well lead us to labour all we can to secure them to our children: we may indeed be thankful when any turn to God and repent after careless or sinful lives, whether in manhood or old age: still such change and repentance is not such as the purity and holiness of Christian childhood, trained in God's ways from the first, and loving and fearing God from early years; offering unto God the spring-tide of life, its strength, its freshness, its manifold gifts, and like our blessed Lord Himself, each year increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

CIRCUMCISION.

JESUS A SAVIOUR BY OBEDIENCE.

ST. LUKE ii. 21. *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called JESUS.*

THE year of the world begins to-day ; meanwhile the holy Church has so far advanced in her year, that having spent a month in preparing for Christ's birth, and a week in celebrating it, we now begin fairly to enter upon His life, and to consider the first event in it, His circumcision. The gospel for the day contains the history of this event in the verse I have chosen for the text : and there are two great doctrines which it joins together and brings before us ; viz. that Christ was to learn obedience by suffering, and that by this His obedience He was to be our Saviour. The first of these is shewn by His submitting to be circumcised ; the second by His receiving, when so circumcised, the name of JESUS, the Saviour. Let us shortly consider these two points.

1. The text tells us, " Eight days were accom-

plished for the circumcising of the Child ;” this was in strict accordance with the order of God to Abraham. “Thou shalt keep My covenant,” said the Almighty ; “thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is My covenant, which ye shall keep between Me and you, and thy seed after thee ; every man child among you shall be circumcised he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you.” Circumcision, then, or the cutting off of part of the flesh of the foreskin, was the painful way in which it was appointed for every male infant amongst the Jews to be brought into covenant with God. It was not like baptism, a sacrament having both an outward sign and an inward grace. It had the outward sign of wounding the body, as it is the instrument of lust ; and it no doubt signified that the spirit within must be chastised and cleansed ; that all that can lead to impurity and sin must be cut off from the soul : as St. Paul says, “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ; neither is that (truly) circumcision, which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.” But the outward rite only *signified* this inward holiness, it did not *produce* it. Holy baptism, how-

ever, besides the outward part of washing with water to *signify* the putting away of sin, has, as you know, the inward grace of the new birth, by which sin *is* actually *put away*. Both are signs, but baptism is also something more; it does what circumcision did not; it *gives* the cleansing which it represents.

Thus, then, the Jewish rite was only a sign of obedience, a painful ordinance causing bloodshedding and tears to the tender infant upon whom it was performed; a sad representation of the truth, that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Indeed so painful was it, that even Moses and his wife seem, if we may judge from Zipporah's words, on this account to have delayed to perform it upon their son, until God's anger was visibly shewn at their disobedience. "It came to pass," we read in the book of Exodus, "by the way in the inn, that the Lord met Moses, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So God let him go; then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision." But painful as it was, both for the infant to undergo, and for the

parents to witness, it was the one mark of obedience which God required from them; and therefore it was that Christ underwent it. Having condescended to take upon Him our common nature, and to be born as powerless as any other infant, and subject to all the conditions of God's laws, which bound the rest of the sons of Abraham, our Lord must needs be circumcised like any other Jewish babe. He must take upon Him the sign that sin should be put away, being indeed the only one of all mankind who could by His own strength make that sign a reality. Though He were a Son, yet must He learn obedience by the things which He suffered. He must be able to say in the words which He had long before uttered by the Psalmist, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy will, O My God: I am content to do it; yea Thy law is within My heart." "I made haste, and prolonged not the time, to keep Thy commandments." Soon, indeed, was He called upon to obey; in haste truly, and prolonging not the time, did He keep His Father's commandments. One short week, wrapped in swaddling bands, He lay in the manger, and then forth He came to do His Father's will. Eager to rescue sinners He was but eight

days old when He began to shed His blood for them : forward to bear the chastisement of our iniquities, even while yet unable to lift up Himself He began to feel the smart due to a world's wickedness.

2. But the text continues :—" His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb : " for the angel had said, " Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost : and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS ; for He shall save His people from their sins."

What a glorious name ! how full is it of meaning ! Men have been called the great, the wise, conquerors, deliverers of their country, lovers of mankind ; none but this little babe deserved to be called the Saviour, JESUS. Conqueror of Satan, Deliverer from the bands of sin, Victor over death and corruption, Redeemer of the world, Saviour of that multitude which no man can number, which shall hereafter stand before the throne on high ; all this is included in that one short Name. The heavenly hosts adore it ; the devils, as they themselves confessed at Ephesus, know it and flee before it ; the holy Church

bows down at the sound of it, like a vast harvest-field beneath the wind. With what gladness does the penitent hear the name of JESUS, bringing to him the assurance that he is not lost for ever; with what gratitude does the fainting Christian remember it, speaking as it does of health and strength to his soul; with what affection must the saint regard it, reminding him of infinite mercy, and of redeeming love, of the remission of sins, of peace of conscience, of joy and pleasure found in holy Communion, of hopes on high that shall not pass away. It has a meaning of its own, suited to the wants, the hopes, the love of every soul. For whatsoever we need of help, whatsoever we hope of reward, whatsoever we love of all that is beautiful and excellent, is contained in Him, who, amidst the bloodshed and weeping of circumcision, received as at this time the only name that could describe Him aright—JESUS, the Saviour.

At baptism, each Christian receives a name, which through his after life is to remind him of what he then became. Being then admitted to be a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of heaven, whereas before he had been but a child of wrath and of the evil one, a new name is given him to mark the change. Hence-

forth he is to be Christ's soldier and servant, and manfully to fight under His banner. So it was also, though for a different reason, with the Son of God. Being before, the Lord Almighty, the Judge of all the world, He was now, not to change indeed His nature, but to add to it; He was to be the firstborn of many brethren, the Redeemer of mankind. Therefore another name was to be given Him, one not setting forth His majesty and power, but telling of His love and goodness; one derived not from His being from everlasting with the Father, and one with Him in glory; but from His learning in the weakness of human nature to obey, and by obeying, to be made perfect. "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name; that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This then is the doctrine taught us by the Services of this day, that we have a Saviour, who,

with a share in all the weakness of our nature, has yet raised it by His perfect obedience, shewn amidst all kinds of suffering, not only to that place in God's favour from which Adam's disobedience caused it to fall, but to the very right hand of the FATHER. And now what are the practical consequences of this truth?

First, that we must learn obedience in the same manner. We, like our Lord, are born in a land where a *covenant* with God is offered to us, where God's favour is to be won on certain conditions; circumcision was to Him the appointed way of admission into God's Church, as baptism is to us; it was one of the outward forms which the laws of His Church commanded, and therefore Christ complied with it. Is not this sufficient reason for us to do the same? Must we not learn to give up our own fancies as to what is necessary for salvation generally, or for ourselves particularly, and follow reverently the Church's guidance? Must we not learn obedience by taking the path marked out by the teaching of the catholic faith, however painful to our human nature, however contrary to our natural inclinations it may at first sight appear?

And again in the common duties and trials of life, should we not always see in them an oppor-

tunity of practising obedience? How inclined we are to give up any work or place that seems to cause us annoyance, how apt to seek other duties which we fancy would suit us better, would not call for so much self-denial, would not cause us so much disquiet and anxiety. Yet we are where God's ordinance and providence has placed us; it is our duty not to look around as it were for some one to come and relieve us, not to peer about for some means of escape, not to build ourselves up upon the proud resolve to break our fetters at the first opportunity, but to trust ourselves humbly to God, to do our best as we are, to leave ourselves entirely at His disposal, to seek relief in contentment, an escape in carefully doing our duties, peace in entire submission.

And, once more, in the troubles caused by our own sins, how prone are we all to murmur, as though some strange thing had happened to us, as though some unjust treatment were laid upon us. Surely if our Saviour could as a little infant, born too without spot of sin, submit to the wounding of circumcision for our sakes; it should not be a great thing in our sight, if we are called upon to suffer weakness, or trouble, or poverty, or contempt, or provocation, in consequence of our own faults or negligences. When

we can shew ourselves to be without sin ; when we can prove that God has no reason wherefore He should contend with us ; when we can satisfy Him that we have no more virtues to improve, no more excellencies to make perfect, then we may complain : or rather, not even then, for then will come before us the vision of the bleeding Lamb of God, and we shall thank the Almighty that we have been counted worthy to be partakers of His sufferings, that we may hereafter share His glory. Oh if people would but learn the duty, set forth not only in this the first event in our Lord's life, but throughout the whole time He was on earth, of a trusting, loving obedience to their heavenly Father, what peace they would find for themselves !

The heart of man is made to rest upon God ; we may try for a while to find satisfaction in other things ; we may try to find pleasure in foolish amusements, to obtain joy by worldly success, to win comfort by setting our hearts on our relations, our home, or the other objects of our affection : and we may find satisfaction in these for a little time ; but thanks be to God for His merciful dealing with us, we cannot find it in these for ever ; we feel all along that before we can be perfectly at peace, we must turn and

give ourselves to God, must come obediently to His footstool, and asking Him to forgive us all our wanderings, to overlook all our negligences, to remedy with the abundance of His grace all our want of affection towards Him, offer Him henceforth the entire service of our souls. Brethren, will you not be persuaded to do this? will you not, remembering how your Saviour gave Himself when only eight days old, to obey His Father's commandment, give yourselves also, however young, to do His will? Blessed are they that early learn to obey God. Blessed are they that at any time come to seek Him with their whole heart. Let this blessedness, then, be yours: offer yourselves to-day, heart and soul, to His service: cost what it may, it is better for you to submit to God, than to side with the evil one.

Finally, this day's gospel will teach us not only lessons of obedient walking in the Church's ordinances, of persevering continuance in our allotted duties, of patient endurance under the troubles we ourselves have caused: but it will remind us of the apostle's rule, that whatever we do, we must do all in the Name of the Lord JESUS. In that Name given as at this time to their Lord, Christians must learn to do all their

appointed part. In the Name of Jesus: that is, for His sake, by His strength, and in reliance upon His merits, all our works must be wrought. For His sake, because in gratitude for being saved by Him, and as servants bought by His blood, we must not work for any other. It is so very easy to do good works out of other motives, out of a wish to win the praise of men, or to gratify our own kindly dispositions and better affections, that we have much need to renew our intention of doing our work for Him alone, every morning before beginning it, and every day while in the midst of it. This we shall do, however, very diligently, if we remember that it is also only by His strength that we shall rightly accomplish our task. He is our Saviour, not only in having redeemed us from Satan and death, but still more in having won for us the grace and strength to imitate Him; let us treat Him as such; let us look to Him for that power which we feel the want of in ourselves; let us ask for it in His name, and through His merits, pleading continually His sacrifice before the Father, and we need not fear of obtaining all we require, for He Himself has said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked

nothing in My name : ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Another year has now passed away, and we are all so much further on in our journey of life, so much nearer the hour of death, and the day of judgment. As we grow older, we feel how years hurry by us. Now (to look back on) they are like as a tale that is told. The season comes round again ; the same duties, the same business, the same feelings, meet us ; all things (or nearly all things) around us are the same as they were a year ago. And we can hardly believe that so much time has passed.

And yet a great and serious portion of our time here *has* passed; with its many trials, its many temptations to evil, its many occasions of good. And how has that time passed to *us*? How have we acted under the trials of the past year—its temptations to evil—and its occasions of good? All these are serious questions, to which it much concerns us what answer we can make. For every year adds to the many talents for which we shall have to give an account. Health, strength, learning, riches, time, how have we used them? They have been given us, once for all; whether we have used them, or abused

them, they have passed away for ever, never to return.

If we have wasted them through carelessness, if we have abused them to sin, Almighty God, of His mercy, may yet pardon us upon our repentance. But even repentance cannot make the past undone, cannot give back to us the months, and weeks, and days, which have been consumed in idleness or sin. The *very best* that repentance can do for us, is so to fill us with godly sorrow for past sin and neglect, as that we shall set ourselves in earnest to redeem (in some sense) our mis-spent time, by spending the time that remains more entirely as Christian persons ought.

Again, we should remember, that not only may not occasions which have passed be recalled, but that habits also have been formed in us which are every day harder to cast off. So it is through life. Day by day, year by year, habits, as it were, grow upon us : our character, for good or evil, is formed by degrees. Either, by God's grace, the spirit gets the better of the flesh ; or, through man's sin, the flesh gets the better of the spirit ; either we make progress and grow confirmed in holiness ; or we make progress, and grow confirmed in sin : through life there is no place to

stand still, *all* men move one way or other. One man resists temptations to sin ; is careful in his prayers, in reading holy Scriptures, in self-examination, in meditation ; is strict in his daily life ; denies himself, and makes duty his rule of living : uses all means and occasions of good which God puts into his power, for His glory, and for the good of men : and so such an one goes on from strength to strength : by God's grace he is each year less tempted to evil, more settled and confirmed in good ; each year he finds duty more pleasant, self-denial more easy, as the will of God becomes his will : each year he is able to see better the means and occasions of usefulness which God has given.

This is indeed a blessed onward course, and may well comfort and encourage all such as are set to serve God out of an honest and good heart, to know that time, as it passes, will, with God's help, make their trials less, their duties easier and plainer : but there is a downward course also, against which *all* must be roused, and specially the young. There are many, only too many, whom each year leaves—not as it finds them, but—weaker to obey, and further removed from God and holiness. Such persons give way, day by day, to the daily temptations of life, and

sink under its daily trials : sometimes they fall into known and wilful sins ; sometimes they are careless and thoughtless, and so leave plain duties undone ; leave morning and evening prayer unsaid ; do not read holy Scriptures ; do not meditate on God through the day ; do not examine themselves at night ; do not lay down any rules of life, or seek to do their duty, and please God, but follow ease, or fancy, or any passing feeling ; and are careless about how they use or waste their talents and occasions of good. Such persons' is indeed a downward course ; every year does but make them less prepared for death, the nearer they draw to death ; every year does but add to their many sins ; every year does but strengthen the power of evil habits over them. Such are some of the lessons which the year past and the year which is coming may teach us. May we have grace to lay them to heart ; may Almighty God so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom : unto that true and heavenly wisdom which shall make us wise unto salvation.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THE EPIPHANY.

CHRIST'S WORSHIP ONE OF TROUBLE AND COST.

PSALM lxxii. 11. *All kings shall fall down before Him :
all nations shall do Him service.*

IF there be a doubt of the double sense of some prophecies, there can be but little, I think, as to the psalm from which these words are taken. David seems to have written it, when in order to put a stop to Adonijah's rebellion, he had caused Solomon to be anointed king, and to join him at once upon the throne. In its first sense, therefore, the psalm refers to Solomon, and to the prosperity the land was to enjoy under his rule : but there are several parts of it that can have scarcely any meaning unless we suppose them to point to something beyond a mere earthly king, let him be never so great : so that it seems quite necessary that we should understand them of Christ and of His eternal and universal dominion. Of whom but of our Lord could it be said—"They shall fear Thee, as long as the sun and moon endureth ; from

one generation to another. He shall live, and unto Him shall be given of the gold of Arabia: *prayer* shall be made *ever* unto Him, and daily shall He be praised. . . . His name shall remain under the sun among the posterities: which shall be *blessed* through Him; and all the heathen shall praise Him?" We might feel this to be quite reason enough for taking the words of the text as a prophecy of the call of the Gentiles; as extending to all the heathen world that service which was paid to Christ by the "kings of Arabia," called in the gospel, "wise men from the east."

You have heard in the gospel this day the account there given by the Evangelist of these wise men, or Magi, as they are commonly called, coming from their own country, a long and weary journey to Jerusalem, to worship Christ soon after His birth. You have heard how they were led all the way by a star to the stable where He was laid at Bethlehem; how they offered Him presents and rejoiced at the sight of Him. Now, I say, that the words of the psalm from which my text is taken are a prophecy of this coming of the Gentiles to Christ. I think no one can doubt this who compares them with certain passages in Isaiah that are acknowledged by all to refer to Christ. Isaiah has indeed

almost borrowed the very expressions of this psalm. The Psalmist says, "They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before Him, His enemies shall lick the dust"—and the prophet, "They shall bow down to Thee with their face to the earth, and lick up the dust of Thy feet." In the psalm it is said, "The mountains also shall bring peace, and the little hills righteousness unto the people:" and the prophecy is, "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness." David exclaims, "The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents: the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts:" and Isaiah repeats it; "All they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense. Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God."

Thus the *whole* psalm may be said to relate to the event I have spoken of, and the *particular* passage in the text seems to shew how we are interested in that event. The wise men from the east are, as we learn from it, only the first of a long line included in the prophecy: "*all* kings shall fall down before Him: *all* nations shall do Him service." Ever since they came to worship

Christ, the text has been receiving its fulfilment from all those who have followed their example : our sovereigns are in the number of them who should fall down before Him : we ourselves are amongst those who must do Him service. The psalm is as it were a glass wherein the figures of those that we read of in to-day's gospel, are changed into the multitudes of gentiles who have since been made like to them in their worship of the Messiah, and so it leads us on from their time and place, and persons, to the present, and to ourselves. It is not now the wise men from the east guided by a star to Bethlehem, and offering gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, to the infant Jesus in His mother's arms : but it is the unlearned and poor, as well as the rich and wise, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, led, not by the star in the heavens, but by the light of God's revealed truth discerned by faith, not to Bethlehem in the land of Judah, but to Christ in His Church, His city upon earth ; not as the infant son of David in seeming weakness, but to the exalted and glorified Saviour manifested to be the Son of God ; who has fulfilled what He then promised, knowing no more any distinction of Jew and Gentile, but admitting all alike to worship Him, whether shepherds or kings, from

near or from far, whether they have been ever, or are only now become, His people.

As then these wise men were, as St. Chrysostom says, "the forefathers of the Church," it is our business to prove ourselves to be their descendants, by making our conduct like theirs, an exact contrast to the behaviour of the Jews. They ended at points as far separated from each other as could be; the one party coming to Christ, the other turning from Him; the one worshipping Him, the other crucifying Him—the one offering myrrh as a gift of honour at His birth, the other mixing it with His wine for the draught of death. And so throughout all the circumstances of their visit this difference is observable.

1. First, in their ready belief in Jesus upon the slightest evidence, while the Jews rejected the strongest proofs. God stirred them up by simply shewing them a star—some new and extraordinary light which they at once saw was miraculous—and they came to Jerusalem seeking its explanation. But the Jews, though they had the testimony of the prophets, fixing, as they well knew, both the time and place of the Saviour's birth; though the shepherds had published to them the news told them by the heavenly host;

though these very strangers had forced upon their attention the birth of their King; though Simeon and Anna and Zacharias had borne witness to Him; yet none sought Him except to destroy Him. As an ancient father has said, "They learn from a foreign tongue first of all, what they would not submit to learn from the prophets; that if they were disposed to be candid, they might have the strongest motive for obedience; if they were contentious, they might henceforth be deprived of all excuse. For what could they have to say, who did not receive Christ after so many prophets, when they saw that the wise men, at the sight of a single star, had received Him, and had worshipped Him?"

2. And not only in their willing faith are these wise men our examples, but also in cheerfully encountering danger and difficulty in consequence of that faith. They came, it may be, from that Sheba of which our Saviour said, that it was in the utmost parts of the earth; undertaking what was in those days, and in those unsettled times, a long and perilous journey for His sake. They came fearlessly before Herod, to say that they sought to worship another King of the Jews; they were not daunted by the tumult among the chief priests and throughout all Jerusalem; but they

persevered to the end, until the same star that had so long before caused them to leave country and friends and home once more appeared, to their great joy, and marked the spot where their search was to prove successful. But the Jews would not go even the short distance of Bethlehem from Jerusalem to see Him who in so wonderful a manner was declared to be their own King. They would have met with but little trouble, and no danger; they would not have had to cross the borders of their own land; their friends and home they would have left scarce a single day; but they were too proud to be instructed, too selfish to bestow aught of their time or care upon what they thought an uncertain gain. Let the words of prophets, of angels, and of saints be against them—their own opinions were to them dearer than the truth, their own comfort more precious than the favour of God.

3. Again, these wise men, when the object of their journey was attained; when their miraculous guide pointed out instead of a palace a common manger; when instead of a king, they beheld an infant with His mother, the humble wife of a carpenter; when they found that He who had caused so much excitement in them far away, was unknown or despised at home;

they did not doubtingly imagine that they had deceived themselves or been misled, but at once fell down and worshipped Him, and presented gifts, the choicest that their country could supply, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And what on the other hand did the Jews? We read of nothing but Herod's cruelty, to which it seems they quietly consented. They would not themselves go to worship their Lord, so they cared not if others went to slay Him; they would offer no gifts to honour Him, so they would not stretch forth their hand to defend Him; but, even then, they had within them that heart, which afterwards led them to complete what Herod in vain attempted; they were first faithless, then careless, then pitiless; and while we with the other thousand and tens of thousands of the Gentiles have come to the brightness of Christ's rising, and been hitherto upheld and blest by Him, they have received back the measure which they meted out, and have become, we cannot say undeservedly, disbelieved, uncared for, and pitied less than any men.

Yet we must not boast, remembering how the apostle has warned us to take heed lest if God spared not these the natural branches, He spare not us who have been grafted into their place.

We must beware lest we follow in their steps rather than with these eastern kings in whose train we ought to follow. So little has been told us respecting them, we know not who they are, what their knowledge or hope of a Saviour was, what became of them after they returned to their own country, whether as some traditions maintain they established the worship of Jesus among their own people, or suffered it to die with them ; our ignorance indeed is so complete of all that went before or followed after the one short scene in which they appear in St. Matthew's gospel, that it is our duty to make the most of that example which they have left us, in order that we may follow them through that breach in the middle wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles, through which they were the first to pass.

1. What if no miracle lead us from our daily employments to wander far in search of Christ? what if we have no visible heavenly guide to point out the place of His abode, are we for that left the more in darkness? Are we for that left ignorant of when and how we may find Him? Our Bethlehem, or as the name means, our "House of bread," we all know full well to be this place where Christ is ever present, where

He now offers us our spiritual food. He has long been manifested *to* us; He now waits to be manifested *in* us. We who know Him now by faith, must prove that we know Him, by living as ever in His sight. Every instruction, every support we can desire for our Christian course, has been plentifully supplied us. The rules and guidance of our Church, if we would but heartily follow them, have marked out for us distinctly enough the road in which the wayfarers, though fools, shall not err. And we may find strength enough to keep in it, if we will but seek it for ourselves and such of us as are parents for their children, in listening to God's word read or explained, in joining as often as we can in the prayers of the Church and in the devout receiving of the Holy Sacrament.

We go wrong not because we have no star to guide us, but because we will not take proper heed to the guidance that we have. We may fancy ourselves as safe as the Jews did; we may close our ears against any who would warn us that we are still offenders each in our own particular fault. But we are so vain of our own powers, so fully satisfied that we know all that is necessary, and are trying to perform it; when it is quite evident to all our neighbours

that we are deceiving ourselves; so obstinate are we in refusing to seek Christ with our whole heart even while, it may be, we are professing to shew others where He is to be found, that there seems but a poor chance of our really being amongst those who are to do Him service. That service must ever be, what it was to the eastern wise men, a service of trouble and of cost: it becomes us, then, to see whether ours is such, for fear it be rather such an idle and self-pleasing religion as caused the rejection of the ancient people of God.

2. Now what trouble do we put ourselves to, to come and worship Him whom we confess to be king? What instance can we point out where we have undergone any personal danger, any fatigue, or brought upon us any evil report in our devotion to Christ? Is it really so, that we have done all that we can think of for Christ, and yet find ourselves able to take our ease, to spread the feast, and lap ourselves in idle security? If we really felt the necessity of doing something more for Him than we have hitherto done; if we were, as we say we are, persuaded that we must make a sacrifice to Him of our souls and bodies and all our possessions; we should soon find out duties we might engage in

for His sake which we now leave unattempted. Being constrained by the love of Christ, we should not have long to seek for a way in which to shew it. But because we live as honestly, as devoutly, as much or rather as little like saints, as others do, we are satisfied; and when any give up the comforts of their home, or bring on themselves willingly any unusual labour for their Lord, then like the Jews we are too apt to think ourselves much wiser than they, and well will it be for us if we see our error in time, follow the wise men to Christ, and so do not at length find ourselves cast away.

3. But, as has been already said, Christ's service is not only laborious, it is also costly. It is true that what is costly for one is of but little value to another, that what is much for the poor is nothing for the rich, and on the other hand, that which is *required* from the rich is quite out of the reach of the poor. But it is not so much the value of the gift itself that Christ regards as its value to us. Whatever *we* reckon most precious, that He not only demands, but demands to be given Him cheerfully. An infant such as our Lord was when the Magi came to Him, would get little store by gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, but they offered these, be-

cause they were the most valuable products of their land. These presents have been explained as symbolical both as to Christ who received them, and as to the wise men who gave them. On His side gold, it is said, shewed Him to be a king, incense was given to Him as to God, and myrrh, the chief ingredient among the spices used for embalming, shewed Him also to be mortal man. While on the side of those who brought them, gold is said to have represented that charity which never fades or tarnishes, incense, those prayers that should ever be ascending up to the throne of God, and myrrh the bitter tears of penitence. But without insisting on any such interpretation, it is quite clear that we must all spare something of the best we can produce to honour Him. Bright is our light, safe our way : but selfish is our worship and poor are our gifts.

The wise men left their homes to seek a king of whom they knew nothing, we will not even *in* our homes think of Him whom from our youth we have been taught to regard. They crossed deserts, and mountains, and rivers, to kneel before Him ; we will scarce cross a street to join in His worship. They offered gold, we will not offer even our love ; they presented incense, we will scarce present a prayer ; they spread before Him

myrrh, we have not shed a single tear of sorrow for our negligence. Let this no longer continue, let us begin with penitence, continue with prayer, and try to make ourselves perfect with love. So only shall we be able to take our place among the people of God, so only can the prophecy be fulfilled in us, "All kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall do Him service."

"Arise, shine," says the prophet Isaiah, speaking of this day, "for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Our light has arisen upon us, and Christ manifests Himself to our hearts. Should we not be drawn to the brightness of His rising? should we not be led to worship Him and give Him of our best? We have, the most of us, no gold, or frankincense, or myrrh to offer Him: but we have what He likes as well. Instead of gold, a royal gift, we may give Him love, pure and free from all earthly mixture, as if purified seven times in the fire. When you have heard of Him here; when you have known how He loved you, so as not only to die for you, but also to give Himself to be your spiritual food in holy Communion, will you not worship Him with this offering? shall we not, as the sight of Him

risers upon our eye of faith, give Him in this particular all we can? Let us do our best, let us seek from Him the gift of a true affection, let us consecrate our heart as wholly as may be unto Him, let us devote it to One who so richly deserves our devotion. O royal Saviour! light of our souls, teaching us the good and the true way, leading us by Thy loving correction, so mixed with mercies, into the path of happiness, teach us to worship Thee with all our best affection, make us to look after Thee, give us first what Thou wouldst have us return unto Thee, a heart sincerely bent on pleasing Thee!

Again, instead of frankincense, that offering to our God, we may give Him prayer. Ascending up like the smoke from the censer, sweet and pleasant before God, our devotions may be set forth in His sight. If He have shewn Himself to us in the services of this house, if He have taught us in any way that He is indeed the Lord our God, surely we shall not refuse Him this gift. He has told us that He will accept our prayers if offered in His name, and be pleased with them; so good for ourselves, so pleasant as they may become to us, we should not neglect them even for our own sakes; but when He will take them as an offering to Himself how doubly ready should we be at all times that it is allowed

us, to bring them before Him! O divine Saviour, always more ready to hear than we to pray, pour out upon us the spirit of prayer? Grant us once more that which Thou dost require at our hands. Thou hast told us to ask, teach us to ask aright.

Lastly, instead of myrrh, that bitter but precious gift suited to human nature, we may give Him contrition, true sorrow for our sins. Almighty God has all this world's treasures in His hands. He possesses all honour and power, and riches and glory. He owns all things both in heaven and earth. What then can we add to His store? What can we poor mortals, we unhappy sinners, give Him, that He does not already possess? There is one thing He has not of His own, one thing of value in His sight, which yet the treasure of heaven is without, and that is "a penitent's tear." Let us seek to give Him this, let us if in aught we have offended Him give Him the gift of contrition. He will not refuse it, we may believe that He will put our tears into His bottle, will write our repentance in His book, for He Himself has told us to say, "The sacrifices of God are a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

SINCERITY IN ERROR.

ACTS ix. 4. *And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*

THIS day we keep in memory of the Conversion of St. Paul; and it is a day greatly to be observed by Christians, and especially by such as ourselves, whose fathers were heathens, until God was pleased to make known unto them His Son. For St. Paul was, as we know, in an especial sense, the Apostle of the heathen; and it was by his means chiefly, among the Apostles, that the heathen were at the first converted to the faith of Christ. Nay, and it may be, as some learned men have thought, that we of this very island first received the faith of Christ through the preaching of St. Paul. Well, therefore, may we keep this day in devout and grateful memory of the mercy vouchsafed unto St. Paul, and herein unto us also, and unto the whole Gentile Church.

Now there are in the Acts of the Apostles three accounts of the conversion of St. Paul; this in chap. ix., from which the text is taken, and which has been read as the Epistle; that in chap. xxii., which has been read as the Second Morning Lesson; and that in chap. xxvi. which is read as the Second Evening Lesson: and the three accounts should be read together, and carefully compared, in order that we may enter into every part and detail, and may learn every lesson which God would have us to learn from the circumstances of the conversion of St. Paul.

But, first, I will put together, in few words, what we know of the life and character of St. Paul, before his conversion. Thus he speaks of himself in the third chapter to the Philippians, "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." St. Paul was by birth a Jew, and of the tribe of Benjamin, born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, and so by birth a citizen of Rome. His name before his conversion was Saul; and we may suppose either that Saul was his Hebrew name, and Paul his Roman name; or that he took the name of

Paul on his conversion ; or (when he is first called by that name, Acts xiii. 9) after the conversion of Sergius Paulus. But, although his birth-place was Tarsus, he was brought up at Jerusalem, as he himself says, chap. xxii., "I am verily a man that am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day." And again, chap. xxvi., "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews ; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." Such was St. Paul before his conversion ; having "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge ;" strict and earnest and conscientious in doing that which he had been taught to think it his duty to do, and in striving for that which he had been taught to think the true faith and service of God ; yet blinded, by early education and strong prejudices, against the Gospel, and so "persecuting the Church : " nay, when "the blood of the martyr Stephen was shed," he "was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment

of them that slew him." Still there was that in Saul, even when "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," even when he "imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed" in Christ: which God, who alone knoweth the heart, had regard to. And so God called him, by special miracle, not alone to believe, but to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ; that so that same sincerity, and zeal, and earnestness of purpose, which had made him at the first a persecutor, might, by God's grace, and the renewal of His Spirit, make him a faithful witness of Jesus Christ; and, at the same time, that his conversion might be, to the Church in all ages, a memorial of the divine mercy and forbearance. Thus St. Paul himself writes to Timothy, i. 12, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me worthy, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, *because* I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit, *for this*

cause I obtained mercy, *that in me first* Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on Him, to life everlasting."

Saul was on his way to Damascus, when God wrought his conversion. Not content with what he had done against the faithful at Jerusalem, he "persecuted them even unto strange cities." Thus we read, "And Saul . . . went unto the high-priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that, if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem (for to be punished). And, as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, (above the brightness of the sun,) and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him (in the Hebrew tongue) Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Our Lord said not, Why persecutest thou My Church? My disciples? but "why persecutest thou *Me*?" For, whatever of good or of evil is done unto the disciples of Jesus Christ, unto the least of these His brethren, is done unto Him: whatever is done unto any one member of His mystical Body, is done unto Him, the Divine Head of the Body. "And he said, Who art thou,

Lord? and the Lord said, I am Jesus, (of Nazareth,) whom thou persecutest : it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." It is hard for thee to strive against One mightier than thou ; it can but bring harm and loss to thyself ; the thorns, which thou spurnest, will but enter into thy own flesh. And here the gracious and merciful words of our Blessed Saviour, together with divine grace, seem at once to have changed the purpose and heart of Saul, to have humbled and bowed him to the divine will. "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Thus our Lord, even after his miraculous call, was pleased to remit St. Paul unto the Church, and unto man, and unto the sacraments, to make known unto him His will, and to perfect in him his conversion ; as St. Augustine says, " Let us consider rather, that the apostle Paul himself, although cast down to the earth and instructed by the divine voice from heaven, was yet sent unto man, to receive the sacraments, and to be joined unto the Church." A lesson, Christian brethren, for us all, to look to the means of grace in the Church, and to listen to them who are set over us in the Lord.

“And Saul arose from the earth, and, when his eyes were opened, he saw no man; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.” No doubt these were days of severe trial and bitterness of soul, when as yet he knew not what was God’s will and purpose concerning him, and when, no doubt, the sense of his past sin in persecuting the Church of God was fresh and keen. At the end of the three days Ananias was sent to him by God, that “he might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” The words of Ananias, as given in chap. xxii., are much to be noted, as setting forth the necessity of the ordinary means of grace, even when the conversion had been miraculous. “And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see That Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the Name of the Lord.” How great must be the necessity of the means of grace, where they may be had! And, chiefly, how great must be the necessity of the sacra-

ment of holy Baptism, if St. Paul, even after his conversion by miracle, yet needed that holy sacrament, and was yet in his sins, until his sins were washed away by the "one baptism for the remission of sins!" Our Lord had Himself called St. Paul by a voice from heaven, our Lord had Himself wrought St. Paul's conversion by miracle, and yet, after all, it was necessary for St. Paul also to be baptized. It was not enough that he believed, he needed also to be baptized; even as our Lord had said, "he that believeth, *and is baptized*, shall be saved." St. Paul needed (even as we need) to be born again of water and of the Holy Spirit, in order to enter into the kingdom of God: and Ananias preached unto St. Paul, even after his conversion, the necessity of holy Baptism for the remission of sins, even as St. Peter had before preached it unto the multitude on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

These then are among the lessons which we may learn from the conversion of St. Paul. That God has compassion upon such as are serious and earnest, even when in error: and mercifully seeks to lead them unto the truth: not that it

matters little, what a man believes, if only he be sincere—rather it matters much, very much, or, so to say, it matters everything : (otherwise, surely, God would not have wrought so great a miracle to bring about the conversion of St. Paul, to open his eyes, and to make him to see and receive the truth, against which his early education had blinded and hardened him)++but that God, of His mercy, has regard to such as are serious, earnest, and sincere, and saves them, not usually, in their error, but by leading them to the truth. Again, that when God touches men's hearts by His grace, even when He works a miracle to convert and save them, it is to His Church, to His ministers, to His sacraments, that He sends them, to perfect in them that good work which His grace has begun. It was so at the first ; so we read, “ the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved ; ” it is so now, it is *in* the Church that God wills to save men, by the ministry of His word and sacraments, by His pure word preached, by His sacraments duly ministered. The Church is the sheep-fold, wherein the good shepherd hath set the sheep and lambs of His flock. *There* He careth for them. *There* He washeth away their sins by the cleansing waters of holy Baptism. *There* He

feedeth them with the word of life, and with the bread from heaven. And blessed are they, who are content and glad to remain within that secure fold, who, having been washed from their sins, endeavour to keep themselves pure, feeding on such food as their heavenly Father hath provided for them, not yearning after strange pastures, not seeking meat for their lusts, not hewing them out broken cisterns. Blessed are they, who can take to them the words of holy David, and can say from the heart, "The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing; He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort: He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me: Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me, Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full. But Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Now all this is very contrary to what men at this day say and feel; men make light of religious error, however serious, provided the persons in

error appear to be sincere and earnest in their error; again, men take little account of the loss of sacraments and means of grace, where the persons who refuse or slight them have what is called faith; not so holy Scripture; not so the word of God; not so the Church of God. Holy Scripture and the Church have ever taught another lesson, even the lesson of to-day; that God's truth is a great and awful gift, precious and blessed to them who receive it, dangerous and harmful to them who reject it; that the sacraments and ordinances of religion are necessary, so far as God has revealed to us, unto the salvation of the soul, that they are the ordained channels of God's grace, the means whereby He washes away our sins, causes us to be born again of the Spirit, engrafts us into, and continues us in, the Body of Christ, and feeds us with the Body and Blood of His dear Son. This is the teaching of holy Scripture and of the Church; this the lesson of to-day. When persons in error in religion appear to us to be sincere and earnest in their error; we may be thankful that they are so, we may even hope well of them, so far as this is the case. But then one ground to hope well of them, so far as we are warranted by the event of to-day, will be

this ; we may hope that God, by His grace, will teach them and lead them into His perfect truth, into the faith once delivered unto the saints. We may hope that God will cause them to partake of His sacraments, and so to be found with His Church. Thus it was that God set forth His grace and mercy in the conversion of St. Paul, not leaving him in his error ; not leaving him an alien from His Church ; but first, making Himself known unto him by miracle, and then, calling him by His servant Ananias, to arise, and be baptized, and wash away his sins.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THE PURIFICATION.

THE HONOURING OF THE LAW.

ST. LUKE ii. 22—24. *And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.*

THIS day, forty days after Christmas Day, we commemorate two events, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, which happened forty days after the birth of our Saviour: both solemn and touching events in themselves, and yet more so when we consider them as circumstances connected with the mystery of His holy incarnation, wherein “the only-begotten Son of God . . . God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God . . . for us men and for our salvation came down

from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

The law of the purification of women after child-birth is set forth in Leviticus xii. All women were ordered to continue in a state called unclean for forty days after child-birth, if they had borne a man-child; and for eighty days, if they had borne a female; during which days they were bidden to touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary; at the end of this time, when the days of her purifying were fulfilled, the woman was to "bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation unto the priest; who shall offer it before the Lord, and make an atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood . . . and if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring *two* turtles or *two* young pigeons, the one for the burnt-offering, the other for a sin-offering." And this rite of purification after child-birth, under the law, would seem to set forth the corruption of the nature of all men since the fall of Adam; whereby all men are conceived and born in sin, and so are, by nature, children of God's wrath; are, by their very conception and

birth, impure and unclean ; in token of which, both the male child was circumcised and the mother cleansed by a sin-offering from her uncleanness.

Now it may seem strange to us that this was done in the case of the birth of our Saviour, for, in that our Lord Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and so was conceived without spot of sin ; and in that she, in whom He was conceived, and of whom He was brought forth, His blessed mother, could have incurred no pollution from the pure and sinless fruit of her womb, or from her childbirth, wherein the mother of the holy Child Jesus was at once a mother and a virgin,—it is most certain that she needed not to offer a sin-offering, nor to seek to be purified, inasmuch as she had incurred no pollution by the immaculate conception and birth of the Son of God : yet, as being born under the law, it became our Saviour to fulfil all righteousness, not only in His own person, by the ordinance of circumcision, and by being presented in the temple, but also in the person of His mother, by the ordinance of purification. And further, as the circumstances of the miraculous conception were unknown to the world, the blessed Virgin would seem to them to

be included in the law ; and her great lowliness also would no doubt lead her rather to hide and veil her singular privilege. Thus duty, and reverence, and humility, and care not to offend others, would all concur to lead the blessed Virgin to the temple of God, there to offer her sacrifice, and to seek the purification which yet she needed not. And surely herein the mother of our Lord is a pattern to us all ; a pattern of lowliness and meekness, of quiet and retiring ways, of a proper regard for the feelings and opinions of others, and of dutiful zeal for God's ordinances.

A young pigeon, or turtle-dove, for a sin-offering, was required of *all*, whether rich or poor ; but, whereas the charge of a lamb might be too burdensome on poor persons, no more was required of *them* than *two* pigeons or *two* turtles, one for the sin-offering, the other for a burnt-offering, in place of the lamb. As the wife of a poor carpenter, the blessed Virgin made the offering appointed for the poor ; hence St. Luke here gives that part of the law which refers to the offerings of the poor. Such mean and low estate did our blessed Saviour choose, when He came into the world for the work of our redemption ; such was His great condescension and kindness, that, " though He was rich, yet for our

sakes He became poor ; that we through His poverty, might be rich." Even from His birth in the stable at Bethlehem unto His death upon the cross, He chose the low estate of the poor ; He hungered and thirsted, was worn and weary ; He had not where to lay His head ; and thus, by partaking of it Himself, He blessed and sanctified that which man despises, the low estate of the poor ; and shews to the poor, when they perhaps think that none feel for them or sympathize with them, that their Lord and Saviour can do so, because He Himself went through all their trials, for He was a poor man Himself and the child of the poor.

The second event which we on this day commemorate is the Presentation of Christ in the temple, wherein was fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi, "... the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple ; even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in : He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." A most wonderful fulfilment of so august a prophecy ; which we might have supposed referred to some great and glorious outward triumphal coming of the Lord whom they sought ; but He came suddenly, unexpectedly, and they knew Him not.

This also was done in obedience to the law ;

although our Saviour is the Son of God, He is presented to His Father as the Son of man.

Not only was the mother required by the law to be purified after child-birth, but the first-born also was to be offered unto the Lord. "Sanctify unto Me all the first-born; whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast, it is Mine." These are God's own words, when, at the first, He slew the first-born of Egypt, and passed over and spared the first-born of the children of Israel: and it was in memory of that night of judgment and of mercy—of judgment on His enemies, of mercy on His own people—that God claimed as His own all the first-born both of man and of beast: the first-born of clean beasts to be offered in sacrifice, the first-born of man to minister before the Lord, unless redeemed, as God allowed in the case of the first-born of man, and required in the case of the first-born of unclean beasts. In after-time God took the tribe of Levi to minister before Him in place of the first-born, yet still so much of the old law remained, that the first-born of man was still presented before God in the temple, and redeemed at a fixed price, five shekels, the same for all, rich or poor, to set forth, it may be, the solemn truth, that all are

equal in God's sight: that the child of the rich, the heir of a kingdom, is of no more value in His sight than the infant of the poor: and the first-born of the children of Israel thus presented before God and redeemed, are no doubt a type and figure of the true people of God, "the Church of the first-born" who are "redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."

Thus, in order in this point also to fulfil the law of God, Joseph and Mary brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord, ("as it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.") By the hands of the priest they present Him unto His Father; they redeem Him with the five shekels, and they receive Him back, to be subject unto them as a dutiful child is subject unto his parents, until such time as He shall be called to do His Heavenly Father's work.

And here something must be said of the two holy and blessed persons, Simeon and Anna, unto whom Almighty God was on this day pleased to reveal His Son. They were in the temple when the child was brought in, and they recognised Him as the Saviour, the long-promised Messiah.

Blessed indeed was he, who had so waited for the consolation of Israel, as that he saw the Lord's Christ; blessed was she, whose nights and days of prayer and fasting in the temple had, at the last, this recompense. The Lord was come to His temple, and they knew Him not; His own people, His own priests knew not their Lord and Saviour; but these two saints and servants knew Him. They had long waited for Him, they knew that He was promised to come as the Saviour of His people, they had doubtless read of Him in the prophets, and saw something of the tokens of His coming in the signs that shewed that the prophecies were fulfilling. Indeed Simeon had had a divine promise that he should not die till he saw Him. Thus they had long yearned for His Advent, they had long schooled their hearts by prayer and fasting and patient waiting on God in His house of prayer, and so He could not be hid from them. Even in the helpless babe of the wife of the carpenter they saw and confessed the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, the Anointed of God, the Messiah, the Christ. Oh, great and marvellous reward of faithful waiting upon God! "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man

was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him: and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. And there was Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with prayers and fastings night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel."

This hymn of holy Simeon is said daily in the church at Evening Prayer; daily we repeat his words; may we, as we repeat them, endeavour to

make them our own ; for all that holy Simeon then saw, we also have seen, if not with the eye of the body, yet with the eye of the soul : we have seen the salvation of God, the Saviour of the world : we have had experience of His saving grace in our own selves ; each day is He set forth to us in the holy Scriptures and in the church, and we all may see Him there, if only the eye of the soul be pure and keen and purged from sin. Whenever any read His holy word with reverence and attention, He is present ; and present, also, whenever but two or three are gathered together in His Name. And we have seen even yet more than holy Simeon saw, we have seen the prophecy fulfilled, and Jesus Christ made a “Light to lighten the Gentiles,” no less than “the glory of (God’s) people Israel.”

May we have grace to say from the heart his words of devout thankfulness, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,” that is, we have seen Thy salvation, we have known and been partakers of it, Thou hast given us peace in Christ, and lettest us depart with that peace. And we are ready to leave all with God, our time of life and our time of death, our times of health and wealth, our times of sickness and distress. May we be found waiting and watching

for Him, whenever He shall return, or call us to Him. Meek, and patient, and tranquil waiting for Christ, this was the spirit of holy Simeon, this is still the spirit of the devout Christian, ready to depart whenever God shall call, and ready, meanwhile, to do and to suffer whatever God shall appoint.

But there is one other touching thought connected with this holy day, one other lesson, which Christian mothers are to learn from the mother of our Lord. The blessed Virgin came to the temple of God, both to offer her sacrifice of purification, and to present unto God her first-born son. And Christian mothers also are called, by the devout and pious custom of the Church, to approach God's altars, to give hearty thanks unto God, that it hath pleased Him to preserve them in the great danger of childbirth; and, also, to take care that their babes be presented unto God at the font, to be made God's children in holy Baptism, and then given back to them to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let them be careful to discharge both these duties; let there be no needless delay; let the church be the first place into which they and their new-born babes shall enter. The mother of our Lord was careful and exact in her dutiful

and loving service ; although not bound by the letter of the law, yet she came with devout and pious care, at the time appointed, “when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished,” she came both to present her Son, and to make her offering. Let Christian mothers learn of her, whom all nations have called blessed ; let them imitate her pattern, let them come unto the house and altars of the Lord ; to pay their vows in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord’s house. And, surely, it is a solemn and touching thought, that they are herein following in the steps of the mother of our Lord, drawing near unto God, as she drew near unto Him, to offer to Him their prayers and praises for fresh mercies : and together with their prayers and praises, to offer unto Him the fruit of their womb, the children whom God hath given them, that He may bless them, and sanctify them, and make them His own children in Jesus Christ.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. MATTHIAS.

WARNINGS AND SAFEGUARDS.

ACTS i. 26. *And they gave forth their lots ; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

THERE is something in this day's festival different from others ; such as to call up feelings of awe, and alarm, in the minds of serious persons. For on this day we not only keep in memory the holy apostle St. Matthias, and the high place in the Church of Christ into which God by His grace called him ; but we cannot avoid having in memory also that lost and miserable man the traitor Judas Iscariot, into whose place St. Matthias was chosen, to take part of the ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell. And if the memory of the holy apostle is blessed, who preached Christ in his life, and witnessed unto Christ in his death, painful and fearful must be the thought of that other, who fell away and perished in his sin.

Now the fall of Judas Iscariot may be a lesson

and a warning to us, at this day, far more than we usually think. It is true indeed that the sin of Judas was very fearful, and such as cannot in the same way be committed again; but so was their sin who crucified Jesus Christ; and yet we know that there is a sense in which we, by our sins, may crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame: and so there may be a sense in which we, at this very day, may betray Jesus Christ; or, at the very least, we may fall into, and allow in ourselves the same sinful temper and feelings which led on Judas to betray his Lord to death. We do not usually think very seriously of the danger to our souls of one known and allowed sin, of the power for evil of one sinful habit and temper; least of all do we so think, when the sinful habit or temper is not one of (what is called) open and gross sin, or is not one which our fellow-men usually condemn. And yet, so far as we read in holy Scripture, that sin which bears the deepest brand of infamy, which all Christians hate and shudder at, the sin of the traitor Judas, was the result of one sinful temper, and that a temper which the world rarely condemns severely. So far as we read in holy Scripture, that which led on Judas to betray his Lord and Saviour was covetousness.

When the devout Mary anointed the body of Jesus with the precious ointment, Judas was offended and disappointed. Thus we read in St. John's gospel that it was Judas Iscariot who said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor;" and it is added, "this he said not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." And the same is shewn by his saying to the chief priests: "What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?" and by his making a bargain with them to get all he could. Now do we, when we think and speak of the sin of Judas, who "betrayed the Son of man with a kiss," do we usually bear in mind that it was a covetous temper which led the wretched man to it? or do we not, too many of us, who would shudder at his sin, allow in ourselves that very evil temper of heart which led him to it? It is a solemn thought and not lightly to be set aside; that we have in us too often the seeds of sin, the evil tempers which lead to sins, such as we should be the first to condemn; and this, although we know it not.

But there is also another lesson to be learnt from the sin of Judas Iscariot. Should God at any time for our sins, set evil ministers over us;

it becomes a great scandal and offence to see men of evil and sinful lives minister God's holy word and sacraments; and we are tempted, (especially at this day,) to doubt and question, whether such men can be ministers of God at all; and whether Christians are bound to listen to God's word preached, or to receive Christ's sacraments ministered, by such men; now there is one text of holy Scripture clear and express on this matter, teaching us that we may, at once, receive their teaching, and yet shun their evil example. The case of any evil ministers can hardly be worse than that of the Scribes and Pharisees in our Lord's time; yet of them Christ says, "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not;" listen to them, so far as they are lawful teachers set over you by God, but follow them not in their works, wherein they sin against God. And the same lesson we learn from the instance of Judas Iscariot; even within the glorious company of the apostles, there was a traitor; so our Lord Himself says, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Yet was he an apostle of Christ, as truly as others; chosen by

Christ, and sent, in Christ's name, to preach His gospel, as truly as others ; he too cast out devils, and wrought miracles in Christ's name, as truly as others ; and, (although he himself fell away at the last, denied the faith, betrayed his Lord, and perished body and soul,) yet he had preached unto others ; and the word which he preached may have assisted to the salvation of those who heard him, although he, who preached it, was himself lost. He shewed the way to others, but did not enter in himself. Nor may we think that they who received Judas, so long as he was an apostle of Christ, in the name of an apostle, failed, through the sin of Judas, of that reward which Christ promised, " He that receiveth you (My apostle), receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me."

Thus much of the lessons which we are to learn from the instance of Judas,—to distrust ourselves, and to watch our hearts narrowly, lest there be found in us the same evil temper, the seeds of the same sin, which we condemn and abhor in him ; to learn from this instance, that evil men may be ministers of God's word and sacraments, even as Judas was an apostle ; and that the blessing of the word of God is not taken away by the sin of them who preach it ; still less the

grace of Christ's sacraments, from any who receive them with a true and faithful heart. For the blessing of the word, and the grace of the sacraments is not of man, but of God.

Into the place of Judas was chosen, as we have this day read, St. Matthias. It is usually thought by learned men, and was so believed by the early Christians, that St. Matthias was one of the seventy disciples, whom, as well as the apostles, our Lord sent out "two and two, before His face, into every city and place, whither He Himself would come." At any rate it is certain, from the words of St. Peter, that he, who was chosen to be a witness with the apostles, of the resurrection of Christ; to take part of the ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, was of the number of the men "which had companied with the apostles, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that He was taken up from them." At the first, two were appointed, St. Matthias, and Barnabas, surnamed Justus; and the choice between them was solemnly referred by prayer unto Almighty God, the searcher of hearts. And they prayed and said, "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two

Thou hast chosen.” And after this solemn prayer to God, they appear to have had recourse to the casting of lots, a means of learning God’s will, which God Himself had allowed and approved of more than once, in the Old Testament. “ And they gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias ; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” And here we should remember that, in their casting lots, the apostles and disciples did a solemn act, and one wherein we may not doubt that they had the warrant of God’s Holy Spirit.

There is little known of the life and labours of St. Matthias ; he is said to have preached the gospel at first in Judæa ; and afterwards in the east, among a rude and barbarous people, from whom he endured many sufferings, and at the last was martyred. But though we know so little of his life, there is yet supplied to us one saying of St. Matthias, recorded by an early Christian writer, (St. Clement of Alexandria,) which may be of great use in the Christian life at all times, and especially at such seasons as that of Lent, which is so soon coming. The saying is this, “ That we ought to mortify and subdue the flesh, and maintain a continual opposition to it, by granting it nothing whereby its irregular and sensual desires may be gratified ; but that we should on the contrary,

promote and strengthen our souls with faith and divine knowledge.”

May we have grace to lay to heart this lesson of the holy apostle. May we endeavour, in some degree, to conform our habits of life to the rule of the Church of Christ; to endure hardness, to practise (after our measure) the self-denial and abstinence unto which Lent calls us, as it has called all Christians from the first. And surely, Christian brethren, there is need that we set ourselves to practise that which all God's saints have practised. We cannot safely leave it undone, as if there were no command of Christ or of His Church to bind us. Only consider in how much greater danger we are than were the early Christians, of taking up with this world as our home. They had to suffer much loss, pain, death itself, for the name of Jesus Christ. And this would go far, one would think, to wean them from the world. Yet they did not count all this enough. They fasted, they denied themselves, they lived strict lives, they endured hardness. And can we, safely, do less? Are we not in much greater danger of resting in this world as our home? Consider how the comforts, the pleasures of life have increased all around us; and are not these hindrances to us, when we would wean our hearts

from this present evil world? May it not be our wisdom, may it not be our safety, at some seasons, to give up the pleasures, to be sparing in our use of the comforts of life? May not such wise and religious self-denial go to prevent these from gaining too great power over us, so as to become real hindrances in our religious life, and in our course heavenward? And what season more suited than that of Lent, when we are called to meditate both upon our own sins, and upon the Cross of Christ? If we are truly moved to repentance, if we truly cared for our sins, and for the bitter Cross and Passion of our blessed Saviour, how shall we not seek to exercise some self-denial, to deny ourselves some pleasure, some comforts of our station, to strengthen our repentance, and our deep sense of unworthiness.

As the days come round, which we keep holy in memory of the apostles, they may well remind us both of our state of grace and privilege, and of our duty; of our state of grace and privilege as members of the one catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ; and of our duty, not only, with God's help, to hold fast the apostolic faith, and to cleave to the apostolic communion; but also, so far as we may, to conform our hearts, our habits, our daily lives to the apostolic pattern;

to do good to, and to love one another with apostolic charity; to wean ourselves from the world, and to chastise and control our natural desires by apostolic self-denial. This it is unto which we are called. Blessed indeed are we that, through the mercy of God, we are members of that Church which is built upon this foundation of the apostles. May we, like the early Christians, continue stedfast in their doctrine and fellowship; may we follow their teaching; may we cleave to their communion; their teaching, as set forth in the creed; their communion, that of the bishops their successors: and may we also take them as our pattern of life; laying up, and seeking to follow, their rules of holy living and dying.

And of this we may be quite sure, that purity, charity, self-denial, strictness of life, unworldliness, such as theirs, so far as, by God's help, we shall attain unto them, will not only be blessed in themselves as Christian graces and tempers, such as God loves and rewards, but also will go to confirm and strengthen us in a dutiful and loving attachment to their faith and communion. Careless lives, and, even yet more, sinful lives, unchastened hearts, undisciplined tempers, self-indulgence, self-will, selfishness, all these lead

men away into religious error, into heresy and schism ; make men to doubt and question, when it is their duty to obey and practise : whereas strict and sanctified lives, regular habits of devotion, and seasons of abstinence and self-denial, not only help us to overcome our evil desires, and to get the better of our besetting sins, but also open the eyes of the soul to the truths of God, enable it to see them more clearly, to hold them more firmly, and thus to fulfil the words of the apostle—" But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Such are the warnings, such the safeguards, suggested by this holy day. The warning is the sight of one highly gifted, endued with even miraculous powers, taught by Christ's own lips ; the companion of saintly men, and esteemed by the apostles as one of themselves, who had within him one secret cherished sin festering in his soul, turning all good to evil ; hardening him against the love and the grace of Christ, and breaking out openly at last to his utter destruction of body and soul. It is a warning to all who enjoy great religious privileges ; who attend

prayers, are frequent in receiving the sacrament, read religious books, love as it were to be with Christ in thought, and yet allow some one sin to dwell within them. The safeguard is decided, unsparing, severity to ourselves, in respect of that particular sin which besets us, each one. What it is we may know by fairly and honestly looking into our own hearts; and our Lenten self-denial and penitence must be directed to the uprooting of *that* sin. Christ will aid you in doing it: He directs His gracious visitations, His providences, His words, His secret motions of grace, all to this end—to snatch you from ruin, to recover you for Himself, to make you wholly and entirely such as He would have you to be, in soul and spirit, in will and affection.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

ST. LUKE i. 38. *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.*

TO-DAY is the Festival of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The angel Gabriel was sent from God, as on this day, to make known to her the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God; that the Son of God should be made man in her womb by the secret operation of the Holy Ghost; and thus that of her should be born the Messiah; the seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head; the seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed; the desire of all nations; He, of whom the prophet spake, "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,

The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," "Immanuel, God with us." All this, and more than this, was contained in the salutation of the angel; all this, and more than this, in the words in which he spake of the greatness and eternity of His spiritual kingdom, who was to be born of her womb, at once the Son of David, in that He was man, and the Lord of David, in that He was God. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." And when upon this, the Blessed Virgin, (in no spirit of unbelief, but of devout awe and wonder,) said, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" this further reply was made to her, "The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And upon this follow the words

of the text, wherein is set forth the humble, lowly, and believing spirit and temper of the Blessed Virgin, "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

And here it would seem suitable to the Festival to-day, first, to say a few words on the high and holy mystery of the Incarnation; and, then to speak of those graces of purity, devotion, and chiefly of humility, which mark the temper and disposition of the Blessed Virgin, both here, and in her hymn of praise, which we repeat daily at Evening Prayer.

And first, of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as we know, was from everlasting, the Only, the Beloved, the Only-begotten Son of God, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God . . . of one substance with the Father." God, even as the Father is God; Lord, even as the Father is Lord; uncreate, incomprehensible, eternal, even as the Father is uncreate, incomprehensible, eternal; and, when the fulness of the times was come, He, "for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man," as really and truly man, as He is

really and truly God. Only He was not conceived by man, but by the Holy Ghost; and she who bare Him, His blessed mother, was at once a mother and a virgin; and thus He was conceived and “made very man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary His mother, and that without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin.” This is the mystery of His holy Incarnation, which we believe and profess; yea, it is the very rock upon which the Church is builded, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made for us the son of man.

For He was made the son of man, that in Him, and through Him, we may be made the sons of God; parts of His mystical body, the Church; engrafted into Him at holy Baptism, and nourished by Him unto eternal life by the blessed sacrament of His Body and Blood. This is the mystery of His holy Incarnation; this His wondrous condescension, by reason of which the Church daily lifts up her voice of praise in her hymn of *Te Deum*.

“Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.

“Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

“When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin’s womb.”

And surely the thought of this “great mystery of godliness” must be our first and chief

thought on this holy day. The infinite condescension of the eternal Son of God, that He, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (yet) made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross;" this will be our first and chief thought on this holy day: the Incarnation of the Son of God, and all that it speaks to us of the love and mercy of God, and of our own place in God's Church and household. He came to put away our sin, to renew our fallen nature, to sanctify it by union with the Godhead in His own Person; how should we not endeavour to keep it holy, to sanctify it by inward purity, to put away whatever would defile it, to consecrate it unto Him and unto His service by a holy and devout life? Since our Lord hath taken unto Him our human nature, and hath made us parts of Himself in holy Baptism, we are no longer what we were, fallen and lost in Adam, but renewed and recreated in Christ; in place of our own natural weakness, we have within us His strength, the

power and presence of His Spirit flowing from Him, the true Vine, as the vital sap, and pouring life and fruitfulness into every branch that abideth in Him. The Incarnation of our Lord is a great mystery, indeed one may say *the* mystery of our faith; yet is it also a great and solemn practical truth, such as may at once lift up our hearts to God in devout thankfulness, and cause us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, yet with a good and comfortable hope, that what of ourselves we could not do, that we can do by His power and His presence within us by His Spirit.

Thus, then, on this holy day our first thought will be on the Incarnation of our Lord, as on this day announced to the Blessed Virgin.

Next our thoughts will naturally pass on to her, who was chosen by God to be the mother of the Son of God incarnate. Great as was God's mercy and favour towards her; great and awful and unspeakable as was her privilege—that she, the daughter of Adam, and thus born in sin, should be so sanctified as to become the mother of the Lord, as that in her womb by a pure and spotless generation, the Son of God should be conceived and made man;—yet was the mind of the Blessed Virgin lowly and humble

at the last, no less than at the first. The very greatness of God's favour towards her but humbled her the more. When at the first, "the angel came in unto her, and said unto her, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee," we read, "and when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind, what manner of salutation this should be." And when, as we have read, the angel made known to her God's purpose of especial grace and favour to her, her answer was that in the text, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word." Even when called to be the mother of our Lord in the flesh, she forgot not that she was by nature, and in herself, His handmaid; that He who humbled Himself to be made her Son, was yet her God and her Lord, her Creator. And the same spirit is shewn in her hymn of praise; the wonders which God had wrought in her do but humble her the more under a sense of His greatness and of her own lowly estate: it is not in herself, but in God her Saviour that her spirit rejoiceth. I will here read the verses in St. Luke's Gospel, which come next before her hymn of praise, and we shall thus see, how much there was in her state of privilege to move a soul less humble

than that of this blessed Virgin to high thoughts of self. "And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." And upon this follows the hymn of the Blessed Virgin, wherein, in lowly, devout, and thankful words, she sets forth the praise of God for His grace and mercy towards her; words so lowly and devout and thankful, that the Church of God hath taken them to herself for daily use, and daily makes them her own; repeating them daily, even as she repeats daily the Psalms of holy David: and in them offering up to God her hymn of praise for the fulness of the gospel blessings.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For He hath regarded the lowliness [the low estate] of His handmaiden.

For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For He that is mighty hath magnified me [hath done to me great things ;] and holy is His name.

And His mercy is on them that fear Him throughout all generations."

Surely herein were fulfilled the words of the prophet : " For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy : I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." When the Son of God came down from heaven, and was made man, and tabernacled among us, she who was chosen by God to be His mother after the flesh, was meek and lowly, even as she was of eminent purity and holiness. Indeed meekness, lowliness, stillness, quietness, these are the graces which recur to our minds whenever we meditate upon the mother of our Lord. And thus she becomes a

pattern in a measure to all, and a special pattern to Christian women, a pattern of those graces which are suited to their place and station, which make them dear to God, and accepted of Him, and fit them to do Him service. For surely this meekness and lowliness, this stillness and quietness, this modest reserve, are what are set forth, in express terms, by the apostles of our Lord as the special graces of Christian women. Thus St. Paul; "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety:" and St. Peter; "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves." Such, no doubt,

even under the Law, were the holy women, the true saints and servants of God. Such was Hannah, the mother of Samuel; she, whose prayers God heard and granted; she, who was a special type and figure of the Blessed Virgin, both in her lowliness and meekness, and in the devout thankfulness of her hymn of praise. And such, much more, since the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, have been found in the Church of Christ, mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, winning souls to Christ, not so much by the word of teaching, as, "without the word," by their "chaste conversation coupled with fear." Mothers, such as the mother of St. Augustine, whose prayers for their children have at length been answered by their conversion to God; wives, whose patient and quiet gentleness has softened and bowed the hearts of their husbands unto Christ's yoke; sisters, whose purity and meekness have recalled erring brothers into the paths of religion; daughters, whose filial piety has touched and opened their fathers' hearts to receive the true faith and fear of God. Let Christian women now, by God's grace, be such as they of old were. Let them learn to be meek and lowly, still and quiet in all the daily duties of life,

after the pattern of the Blessed Virgin. Thus shall they be dear to Jesus Christ; thus shall they also be blessed, both here and hereafter; blessed here on earth with God's grace and favour, and blessed hereafter in heaven, where in His presence is the fulness of joy, and at His right hand is pleasure for evermore.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. MARK.

THE WRITTEN WORD.

ST. JOHN XX. 31. *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name.*

TO-DAY is the festival of St. Mark the Evangelist. The word Evangelist was not at the first used in the same sense in which we now use it, but meant a preacher of the Gospel: thus it is used by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, which has been read this day, "And He gave some 'Apostles;' and some 'Prophets;' and some 'Evangelists;' and some 'pastors and teachers;'" and in this sense Philip the deacon is called an Evangelist in Acts xxi. "... we entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist, which was one of the seven;" and Timothy also by St. Paul, in his second Epistle, "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of

an Evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." This then was the old use of the word Evangelist ; it meant a preacher of the Gospel : and in this sense both Philip the deacon, and Timothy bishop of Ephesus, were Evangelists. Now we use the word Evangelist, no longer for a preacher of the Gospel, but for the writer of a Gospel : and, as there are only four written Gospels, there are, in this sense of the word, but four Evangelists : of whom two, St. Matthew and St. John, were also Apostles : two, St. Mark and St. Luke, not themselves Apostles, but followers of Apostles : St. Mark a follower of St. Peter, and St. Luke a follower of St. Paul. The word Evangelist then meant at the first a *preacher*, and is now used to mean a *writer* of the Gospel : the word from which it is formed, meaning, in Greek, the same as the word Gospel means in old English, "a good word," or "good tidings." Thus the word Evangelist was used at the first, of all who preached this "good word," or "good tidings," of God : and is now used of the four by whom, or rather by God's Spirit in whom, we have received the same "good word," or "good tidings," of God, written. And it is thus that the whole Church of Jesus Christ, from the very first, hath in all ages received the four written

Gospels as the work, not of man, but of God the Holy Ghost: as a very chief part of the holy Scriptures which God hath, by His Spirit, given to the Church, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." As such, the holy Gospels were from very early times, as now, read in the Churches as the Word of God: as such, the holy bishops out of them both taught the faithful, and convinced the gainsayer; ever referring to them as to a last and final witness for the truth of God, even to God Himself speaking by His Spirit: as such, when they numbered up the sacred Books, the Four Gospels ever had a chief place: as such, when the Church spread far and wide, among men of various tongues, the Four Gospels were ever among the very first books rendered into their mother tongue. And many were the Christians, who, in those early days of persecution, met a cruel death with patience and hope, rather than give up to be burnt the volumes of the holy Gospels.

I will now proceed to put together what we learn from holy Scripture and from early Christian writers of the life and death of St. Mark. It has been thought that St. Mark the Evangelist is the same as John Mark, sister's son to Bar-

nabas, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles, but there are many weighty reasons against this view—and chiefly this, that, whereas all early writers connect St. Mark the Evangelist with St. Peter, both holy Scripture and early writers connect John Mark with St. Paul: and this, it would seem, at one and the same time. Yet there is one place in holy Scripture in which there can be little doubt that St. Mark is spoken of by name, 1 St. Pet. v. 13. “The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus my son.” St. Peter herein calling Marcus, or St. Mark, his son, in the same sense in which St. Paul calls Timothy “his own son in the faith;” which agrees with what a very early writer, St. Irenæus, says of St. Mark, that he was the companion and interpreter of St. Peter.

It is thought that St. Mark was by birth a Jew; as is probable also from the Hebrew phrases which learned men have observed in his Gospel. It is not clear at what time he was converted; one early Christian writer says, that he was one of the seventy disciples whom Christ “sent before His face:” and that he left Christ, on account of those words of His, “Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man

and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you ;” but that he was afterwards recalled by St. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, and so wrote his Gospel. Another affirms, that he had neither heard nor followed Christ, but was converted by the Apostles after the resurrection—which may only mean, that he had not so heard and followed Christ, as the Apostles had heard and followed Him throughout, and thus that His Gospel was not written from what he had himself heard and seen of Christ, but from what he had heard from St. Peter, who had himself heard and followed Christ throughout—and the statement that he was converted by the Apostles after the Resurrection, is in no way contrary to the former, that he had fallen away from Christ, and was recalled by St. Peter.

The occasion, on which St. Mark’s Gospel was written, is thus given by the early Christian historian Eusebius, and is by him taken from yet earlier authors. That when Peter, in the reign of Claudius, came to Rome, and had defeated Simon Magus, “The people were so inflamed with love for the Christian truths, as not to be satisfied with the hearing of them, unless they also had them written down ; that, accordingly, they with earnest entreaties applied themselves

to Mark, a companion of Peter's, and whose Gospel we now have, praying him that he would write down for them, and leave with them, an account of the doctrines which had been preached to them: that they did not desist in their request, till they had prevailed upon him, and procured his writing of that which is now called the Gospel of St. Mark. That, when Peter came to know this, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, he was pleased with the request of the people, and confirmed the Gospel which was written for the use of the Churches."

After this, (as we learn from the same early writers,) St. Mark went to Egypt, where he preached the Gospel which he had thus written from the teaching of St. Peter at Rome, and founded the Church of Alexandria: a Church famous in early times for its great learning and also for its missionary labours among the heathen, insomuch that it was regarded as among the very chiefest of the Churches; and was the Church of which St. Athanasius was afterwards bishop, whom God raised up as a teacher of the true faith against the blasphemies of the heretic Arius, and others, who denied the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Church of Alexandria was founded by the preaching of St. Mark,

and in it he is said to have taught the Christians to live lives of great strictness, and self-denial, and poverty, having all things in common, after the pattern of the first converts on the Day on Pentecost. From Alexandria he is said to have preached the Gospel in other (more western) parts of Africa; then after some few years to have returned to Alexandria, where he suffered martyrdom. Almighty God granting him grace to seal with his blood his witness to the Gospel which he had preached, in that very Church which he had founded. His death is said to have been one of great suffering, protracted over more than one day.

It is thus described by one who has lately written a History of the Church of Alexandria.

“ Seizing St. Mark, and tying a rope round his neck, the Pagans drew him through the principal streets of the city, till the blood gushed from his sides : and, at evening, they threw him into prison, while consulting with respect to his fate.

“ On the same night the sufferer was cheered by the appearance of an angel, who comforted him with the assurance that his name was in the Book of Life ; and shortly afterwards by the Saviour Himself, who, addressing him by the title of Mark the Evangelist, bade peace be with

him. To whom St. Mark replied, 'I yield Thee thanks, O Saviour, that Thou hast counted me worthy to suffer for Thy Name.' On the next day, the Pagans drew the Evangelist around the city, as before, until with the words, 'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' he went to his rest."

Such was St. Mark in his life and in his death. Guided by the Holy Spirit of God to commit to writing, for the use of the Church in all ages, the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and confirmed and strengthened by the same Holy Spirit to preach the same blessed Gospel, and to found a Church, such as by strictness and purity of living, by zealous efforts for the conversion of the heathen, and by firm and fearless witness for God's truth, shone forth as a light in the Christian world: so guided and so strengthened both to write and to preach the Gospel; and, then, further confirmed and strengthened to suffer for the faith: the crown of martyrdom being added to his other titles to have his name remembered with love and reverence in the Church of God.

And, now, to pass to the practical lesson which we are this day to learn. And surely it is this. That we use, and profit by, God's great and singular gift of His Written Word. We have what

the Christians of Rome wished to have, the preaching of the Apostles committed to writing, and so secured to us; committed to writing by men indeed, yet by men guided and overruled throughout by the Holy Spirit, led into all truth, guarded against all approach to error, by the ever-present inspiration of God. May we have grace to use this gift aright for the glory of God, for the edification of His Church, for the salvation of our own souls. This is the practical lesson of to-day; and, in order to this, the Collect puts into our mouths words of thankfulness to Almighty God for the gift of His holy Gospel, and earnest prayer that we may be found steadfast and rooted in it—that “Almighty God, Who hath instructed His Holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of His Evangelist St. Mark, may give us grace, that, being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of His holy Gospel.”—Great indeed and inestimable is the blessing of the Written Word, which we, by God’s great mercy, possess; and possess in such sort, as no other age of the Church, it may be, has possessed it. Great indeed is the blessing, and great also the responsibility, which we have in the Written Word. Alas, for us, if we fail to use

it aright. Alas, for us, if, (with this, which should be a sure anchor of our faith,) we, like children, be carried away with every blast of vain doctrine. Alas, for the unlearned and unstable, who wrest (as St. Peter says) the Scriptures to their own destruction. May we never so tempt God, or abuse His mercies. May we contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints. May we ever approach the holy Scriptures with a quiet, sober, devout, and reverent temper: seeking in them true spiritual knowledge, true practical guidance: not putting upon them new and strange senses, but content and thankful to receive the old; not seeking to explain away the high and holy mysteries of God, or our own duties to God; not speaking or thinking, as if our Christian liberty consisted in receiving and believing only so much as we are willing to receive and believe; but remembering that God Almighty, our Heavenly Father, is herein speaking to us His children, and that it is our privilege and our blessedness to hear and obey His voice, not alone when that voice is clear and distinct, but in its lowest whispers, in its faintest echoes.

Alas for the unloving temper, the spirit of mistrust and unbelief, with which men, in these

days, refuse to submit themselves not alone to the Church of God, but to the Written Word of God, when it crosses their waywardness of thought and will. Without meek and lowly and humble and teachable spirits, without loving dispositions, without chastened tempers, not the best and highest of God's gifts can profit us; not the Written Word, not the holy Scriptures, not the law, not the testimony will teach man his faith or his duty, unless he first put from him pride, waywardness, self-will, self-confidence. Unless by God's help, he thus cleanse his heart, he will but find in the holy Scriptures his own vain conceits in place of God's eternal truth, his own mean standard of duty in place of God's pure and perfect law. Alas, we know not how great and appalling is our danger so often as we approach the Word of God, not for guidance, but for a pretext and excuse for the errors of our faith, or the sins of our lives. Alas, the loud, and careless, and angry tone in which men, in these days, repeat the holiest words of holy Scripture bears witness against them, that they have not sought to them, as to God's Word, with reverence and godly fear, that they have not received them into their hearts and spirits and consciences, as the rule of Christian faith, and of a holy life. They

hear them, and repeat them, loudly and readily, but they do not realize them, do not enter into their deep and manifold meanings; and so, although living and life-giving in themselves, to them they are dead and lifeless. May Almighty God keep us clear from this besetting sin of our times, may He give us humble and teachable tempers, and so, by His grace, establish us in the truth of His holy Gospel.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES.

CHRISTIANS CALLED TO BE FOLLOWERS OF THE APOSTLES.

1 Cor. xi. 1. *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

WHEN our Lord, at the first, sent forth His apostles, we read, "And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two;" and the same also in the case of the seventy, "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself would come." It was the will of our blessed Saviour not to send forth His apostles one by one, solitary and alone, but two and two, with such stay and comfort as they would derive each from the presence of the other; and, as if in memory of this, the Church on this day

commemorates St. Philip and St. James; and again, on another holy day, St. Simon and St. Jude; having in memory two apostles on one and the same day, even as our Lord was pleased to join two together at the first, in one task and labour of love.

St. Philip was of Bethsaida of Galilee, the city of St. Andrew and St. Peter. The circumstances of his call are found in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. He was among the very first called of the disciples of our Lord, his call taking place on the very next day after our Lord's conversation with St. Andrew and St. Peter. And the call of our Lord was, it should seem, at once obeyed: and not only so, but St. Philip, like a sincere and earnest-minded man, sought to lead others also to the same gracious Master, upon whose service he had himself entered. "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith,

unto him, Come and see." In which there is this to be noted, that St. Philip, as it should seem, had read diligently the holy Scriptures of the law and of the prophets, and so had come to truer and juster notions of the Messiah; and was probably (with other "just and devout" persons, such as Simeon and Anna,) "waiting for the consolation of Israel," "looking for redemption in Jerusalem." And thus in him was fulfilled the promise, "Unto him that hath shall be given," i. e. he that useth aright his present knowledge, and his present means of grace, shall have yet fuller knowledge, yet more perfect means of grace afforded to him.

St. Philip was, after some time, called by our Lord to be of the "glorious company of the apostles." And there are certain passages in the Gospels, which seem to shew that St. Philip was very near and dear to our Lord. In St. John vi. our Lord seems to put his faith to the trial. "When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him, for He Himself knew what He would do." And here the faith of St. Philip appears not to have reached into our Lord's Godhead, and Almighty

Power. "Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." Again, in c. xii. we read of certain persons applying to St. Philip, in order to be by him brought into the presence of our Lord. "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the Feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida, of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus, Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and, again. Andrew and Philip tell Jesus." And, again, in c. xiv. in the course of our blessed Lord's conversation with His apostles in the night before He suffered, the request of St. Philip is made the occasion of our Saviour's setting forth in the fullest terms, the unity of substance between Himself and His Father. "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Thus much we learn about St. Philip from holy Scripture. What more we know is found in early Christian writers, from whose works we

gather what notices remain of the lives and deaths of the holy apostles.

The countries, where St. Philip is said to have preached the gospel, were those of Upper Asia, where he remained many years, and, at last, suffered martyrdom in the city of Hierapolis.

We have next to speak of St. James, (called "the Less," to distinguish him from the other St. James, the brother of St. John.) This St. James, the son of Alpheus, is also called in holy Scripture the brother of our Lord. Among the Jews the term 'brother' was frequently used to denote the relation of cousin; and so, probably, in this case St. James was called our Lord's brother, as being the son of another Mary, the sister of the blessed Virgin. In St. Matthew xiii. 55, and in St. Mark vi. 3, mention is made of him as our Lord's brother, and the same term is used of Judas, (i. e. the apostle St. Jude,) Simon, (the same with Simeon who succeeded St. James as Bishop of Jerusalem,) and Joses. After our Lord's Ascension, and before their own dispersion, St. James was instituted by the apostles Bishop of Jerusalem, i. e. Bishop of the Mother Church of Christendom, in consequence, it has been believed, of some immediate intimation of our Lord's will. And so we find special

notices of St. James in the Acts of the Apostles, and other records of the early Church, in all of which his name stands foremost. Thus in ch. xii., St. Peter, after his miraculous escape from prison, mentions St. James by name, "Go, shew these things unto James and to the brethren." And in ch. xv, in the council held at Jerusalem on the subject of the Gentile converts, "When the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter," St. James speaks, it would seem, in some sense, in the name of the whole Church, the sentence of the whole Church. "And after they had held their peace, James answered saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me . . . Wherefore my sentence is" And so St. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, joins his name with that of St. Peter and St. John, as in chief place in Jerusalem. "Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days; but other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. . . . And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right-hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

St. James is also known to us as the writer of the General Epistle which bears his name; in the very first words of which we see his great humility. Although he was an apostle, and bishop of Jerusalem, the holy city, and Mother Church of Christendom; although he was so near akin to our Lord, as that he is called by St. Paul "the Lord's brother;" yet it is not of his high place and apostolic office that he speaks, nor of his nearness to Christ in the flesh; but his first words are: "James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ." And all early records speak of his great and excellent piety and holiness of life. In fact it would seem from them that his life was one course of abstinence, self-denial, prayer, and religious exercises; eating sparingly of the simplest and coarsest food, clothed in the rudest and simplest dress, his knees worn by frequent prayers, his body pale with fastings. Such was the holy apostle and bishop whom we this day have in memory.

And this his piety and holiness of life won for him reverence even from the enemies of the faith, so that he was known even among them by the name of "the Just."

And, as his life had been that of a Christian bishop, ruling the flock over which the Chief

Shepherd had set him, faithfully and wisely, himself "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;" as he had been all this in his life, so was he no less an example of faith and charity in his death.

We read in Eusebius, the early historian of the Church, that at the season of the Pass-over the Scribes and Pharisees summoned St. James before them, and led him up to a pinnacle of the temple; if so be that, by threats or otherwise, they might lead him to deny Christ in the presence of the people assembled beneath. To this end they spake thus with him. "Thou just man, of whom we ought all to be persuaded, the people is deceived, and followeth after Jesus, which was crucified; do thou therefore declare unto us how Jesus is the door." And he answered with a loud voice, and said, "Why ask ye me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? Behold, He sitteth on the right hand of Great Power, and He shall come hereafter upon the clouds of heaven."

When he had said this in the hearing of the multitude, they who had placed him there, in their rage, cast him down headlong. And they began to cast stones at him, because

that, after he was cast down, he died not, but turned and fell upon his knees, saying : "O Lord God, Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do."

Thus was the holy apostle, at his last hour, after the pattern of his blessed Lord, and of the first martyr St. Stephen, praying for his murderers ; and, as he continued to pray, the rude crowd around cast stones and wounded him, until one with a club struck him on the head, and thus put a period to his sufferings.

And thus St. James fell asleep in the Lord, full of years, and reserved, it would seem, unto extreme old age, that so he might seal the witness, which he had borne to Christ, with his blood ; that blood of martyrdom, which has been rightly called the seed of the Church.

We may not be called upon to resist even unto blood, as did the holy apostles, but we, too, have our lesson to learn from holy days like this.

For consider, how on them is presented to our faith that most blessed and solemn truth, that, however far we may be removed from them in time, however much our lot may have fallen on other days, yet that, having been made, in holy

baptism, "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," we too—so many of us as are living in the true faith and fear of God—form part, with them, of the mystical Body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; are members, with them, of His one Holy Catholic Apostolic Church; are partakers, with them, in that Communion of Saints, wherein all, not the living alone, but the dead also in Christ, are gathered into one. Their hour of trial indeed is over, and they are at rest; and we are yet upon the earth, with weak and frail hearts within us, and an evil and sinful world around us. Yet is it a cheering and soothing thought, that those glorified saints of God are our brethren in Jesus Christ, followers of the same Master, heirs of the same promises. In the midst of the same trials and temptations, which by the grace of God they overcame, instructed in the same faith, nourished by the same sacraments, they went on their way rejoicing, even in tribulation, and entered into rest. Do we feel our hearts and our affections drawn to the things of this life, its occupations, its pleasures, its business? Are our minds restless and fevered with the cares of our station, the dreams of youth, or the absorbing realities of manhood and of old age?

where shall we find, what may calm and sober us in the one, and awaken us to earnestness in the other, so surely, as in the solemn thought,—which days like this force upon us,—that we have been made to share with God's saints in their exceeding privileges: that, with them, we have been called to be citizens of a better country, that is, an heavenly, and that it is our duty, treading in their steps, to walk as pilgrims and strangers upon earth, as men who have no abiding city here, no abiding interest in any thing of this world?

Surely, when put in the balance with the hopes of our Christian calling, with the assured blessedness of an inheritance with the saints in heaven, there is nothing in this life which deserves to be sought after with feelings such as we too often indulge in. “The glorious company of the apostles; the goodly fellowship of the prophets; the noble army of martyrs; the holy Church throughout all the world;” these are set forth to us as our brethren; and what relation is there so high, so ennobling; what tie, even of kindred, ought then to exist so dear, as that which binds us to the good and holy in all ages of the Church of Christ; and, with them, to Him? or how

ought we not to walk with all care, all zeal and circumspection, who are united in the bonds of so holy a brotherhood? How ought we not, in our daily life, to be followers of them, even as they also were followers of Christ?

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. BARNABAS.

THE SON OF CONSOLATION.

ACTS xi. 24. *For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.*

As our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God manifest in the flesh, is our one all-perfect pattern and example in all things, in all that He did, and spake, and suffered, so it would seem that upon the head of each of the apostles there rested some one special grace, in respect of which they are proposed for our imitation. Of His fulness they all received, although in their case each received but in part. And blessed indeed are they who have been made partakers of any one grace set forth in the character of our Blessed Lord.

For instance, St. John is for us an example of, (what it is so difficult to find united,) zeal for God's truth, and deep and fervent love. St. Peter is in part a warning as well as an example,

St. Stephen, the first martyr, is a blessed instance of faith, and of Christian forgiveness of injury. St. Paul is a pattern of zealous and earnest labour in the vineyard. And thus all in their turns teach us some lesson of faith and practice.

With this view, then, we would proceed to consider what we learn from holy Scripture of St. Barnabas.

The passage which has been read as the text, may be regarded as setting forth his character in a few short words. "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

It will be my endeavour to put together such notices of the holy apostle, as may help to bring before our minds those "singular gifts of the Holy Ghost," (as they are called in the Collect,) with which he was endued by God.

The first notice we have of St. Barnabas, occurs in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; and it is full of interest. We there read how—when, upon occasion of the conversions to God on the day of Pentecost, the world beheld, for the first time, an example of self-denying Christian charity; when "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and

parted them to all men, as every man had need ;” when “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul ; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common ;” when “as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet ; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need ;” —“Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”

Assuredly, “the son of consolation” was “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith ;” that pure and holy flame of Christian love could have been kindled by no other than God’s own Good Spirit ; no other principle than a true and living faith could have led him thus fearlessly to put away from him his wealth, and to rely solely upon the promises of God.

One history, of which we read in the gospels, forces itself upon us in painful contrast,—that of the young man, of whom it is written, that “Jesus beholding him, loved him ;” but who, re-

ligiously-minded and amiable as he seems to have been, was yet turned aside from following Jesus, and thus, it may be, lost his reward, by this one snare; he could not, it should seem, make this one sacrifice, even when called to make it by our Lord Himself; he trusted in himself that he had kept all the commandments from his youth up; but God, who knoweth the heart, put his obedience, and with it his faith, to the test of one great act of self-denial, and it failed. "The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me. But, when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."

The next occasion on which we have any notice of St. Barnabas, is in connection with St. Paul, in the ninth chapter. And here, again, we find him engaged in a work of true Christian charity, removing from the minds of the Christians at Jerusalem the jealousies and suspicions with which they regarded their old persecutor, now converted into a zealous preacher of Jesus Christ. "And when Saul was come to Jeru-

saalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples ; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." Thus was St. Barnabas, by the will of God, made the instrument of introducing into the bosom of the Church the great apostle of the Gentiles, with whom from that period his own life was so closely connected.

The next notice of him, in the eleventh chapter, from which the text is taken, is much of the same nature, still is he performing the work of "the son of consolation." The Gospel had been preached at Antioch, ever memorable as the place where the disciples were first called Christians, "And the hand of the Lord was with them : and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came to the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem ; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord. For he was a

good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people." And, again, later in the same chapter, St. Barnabas and St. Paul are united in a ministry of consolation, in carrying to Jerusalem, against a time of great dearth, the alms of the faithful at Antioch for the poorer brethren in Judæa.

We now come, in the thirteenth chapter, to the most important event in the life of the apostle. It was the will of God that he should be associated with St. Paul in his great work of making known unto the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" that so he, who had ministered unto his brethren freely of his temporal goods, should be an honoured instrument in the hand of God of ministering unto the spiritual wants of the world. Almighty God, it would seem, thus graciously rewarding the sacrifices which He Himself has put it into our hearts to make, by calling us to higher and holier duties in His Church.

St. Paul and Barnabas were called to this office and apostleship by the immediate intimation of the will of God. Thus we read, "Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." And surely we cannot read even thus much of the life of the apostle without tracing in it the hand of Almighty God, leading on "from strength to strength," from one degree of Christian grace to another; rewarding self-denying charity and Christian love with,—what is man's best reward on this side of the grave,—the being called to be a worker-together with God in deeds of mercy and blessing; making the heart, which overflowed with the love of the brethren, to be full also of all the best gifts of His Spirit; and teaching us that there is no true Christian sacrifice which is not accepted in His sight, no self-denial which man can practise, out of the true faith and fear of God, which shall in any wise lose its reward; although that reward be often far other than what man looks to receive at the hand of God;

although the reward of faith and obedience in this life be often the being called to undergo more for God's sake, to serve Him amidst greater trials, to wrestle against fiercer enemies, and thus, by God's grace, to have formed within us a higher and more devoted character, to be rewarded hereafter with a brighter crown. •

The two chapters which follow are ordered to be read as the lessons for the day, they thus require less to be said on them. The character of the apostle, which they set forth, is still the same,—that of a faithful, and earnest-minded, and affectionate servant of God; and, whilst we follow St. Paul through his first journey, listen to his preaching, and read the details and trials of his mission, we trace the mercy of God in so ordering it, as that he, who had led him, as it were, to the Church, and had been joined with him in good deeds, should be joined with him now, as a “son of consolation,” amidst the difficulties of his course.

But to-day is not without its warning. The instances even of apostles may teach us that the hearts of men, even of the best and holiest, are but frail; the ties of human affection, at the best, but weak. Twice we find St. Barnabas and St. Paul opposed: in the one case, that of John

Mark, his sister's son, strong, if not undue, natural affection rendered him, it would seem, unwilling to exercise what St. Paul deemed to be a necessary severity ; and in the other case, of which we read in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, an easy and confiding spirit would seem to have laid him open to the dissimulation and craft of others. But all this is really no cause or occasion of offence. It only reminds us that the best of men, with the best gifts of God's grace, are yet men ; and that there is none altogether good but one, that is, God. Nor need we seek to hide from ourselves or others what is amiss in them, at the same time that we bless and magnify God's name for them, and for the example which He hath given us in them.

Indeed, we may well say that these things "are written for our admonition," and that we have our lesson to learn from what we read of the contentions of good and holy men, such as St. Paul and St. Barnabas.

All states and circumstances have their trials, all have their dangers, to beings such as we are. Even good and holy men, from being earnest in what seems to them to be right, run a risk of becoming contentious. It is a true and real

danger, and it has often before now caused sorrow of heart to the persons themselves, and much evil to the Church. It is not that any can be too earnest for truth and right, but that they should be careful, at the same time, to maintain charity and humility; endeavouring to enter into the views and feelings of others; putting the best sense upon their conduct; never, without grave cause, imputing to them unworthy motives; but forming a fair and equitable judgment of all that they do; and, no less, cherishing meek and lowly feelings in themselves, together with a true and deep sense of their own personal failings, as what only too often may hinder the right and truth which they profess, from having its due weight with others. What is needed for men to escape a contentious spirit, when led, or forced, it may be, to contend with others in matters of religious faith or practice, is not that they be less zealous, but that they be more charitable, more humble. The fault, so to speak, is not excess of zeal, or earnestness for seeming right and truth; but defect of charity, when we think or judge of others; defect of humility, when we think or judge of ourselves.

And, if such warnings are needed at all times, much more at such times as the present, which

are times of controversy, and, alas! also too often times of bitterness and wrath. We must "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." God forbid that we should fail in this great and paramount duty through any false or spurious (so-called) charity. But we must contend with meekness, we must speak the truth in love; that so our zeal may be true Christian zeal for God, and that the truth, which we speak, may find an entrance into the hearts of our hearers. And if, after all, contentions do arise, as they must do, let us by God's help preserve real love, a forgiving spirit, and inward peace, in our own minds; resigning ourselves to God, and remembering those words of the apostle, whose life was spent in contending in love,—"*If it be possible,*" and "*as far as lieth in you,* live peaceably with all men." And, if this be our duty in the greater matters of Christian faith and practice, how much more in lesser matters of detail and conduct, where, of two parties, each may hold some real and essential truths, and only differ in that the one party fails to see the truth which the other holds, or, seeing it, attaches a lesser value to it than what it can fairly claim. Thus we at this day have a special lesson to learn from, what is in itself painful,

the contention and estrangement for a time of two men, such as St. Paul and St. Barnabas. And, in all else, how great and touching is the pattern set before us. In self-denying love, in charity, in fervent zeal, in meekness, in resigned trust and faith in God, St. Barnabas lived and died an approved servant, as well as a chosen apostle, of his heavenly Master. Doubtless he was not without his faults, but we, Christian brethren, would do well to consider, whether we have within us, in any measure, the graces of his character; whether our lives are, in any measure, such as his was.

Otherwise our loss, our danger, is but the greater, if,—with all our privileges, all our means of grace, and hope of glory, with the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His saints before us, and with God's Holy Spirit within us, to bless every sincere effort after holiness,—we fall short in our Christian course, or live or walk unworthy of our high and heavenly calling. From which may God of His infinite mercy keep us, for His dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST.

PREPARATION FOR GOD'S WORK.

ISAIAH xl. 3. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

THIS day the Church hath appointed to be kept holy in memory of the Nativity of St. John Baptist. The days which are appointed to be kept holy in memory of the apostles, are usually not the days of their birth, but of their death,—the days of their martyrdom; and these, too, the ancient Church of Christ used to call (in a high and divine sense) their birth-days: the days, not wherein they were born, as men, into this world of sin and sorrow, but wherein, as martyrs, witnesses for Christ, they were, as it were, born into the joy and peace of a better world. In the words of St. Augustin, "The disciples of Christ were born, and then, as time went on, and they became of mature years, were taken

into the number of Christ's disciples. They in after years by faith clave unto the Lord, yet did not any of them at his birth do service to the Lord. The prophets, the patriarchs,—they were born as men, and then, in the course of time, were filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied of Christ. They were born, that afterwards they might prophesy. But of St. John Baptist,—his very birth prophesied of Christ the Lord, inasmuch as from his mother's womb he saluted Him yet unborn." That is, the Church would seem to keep holy the day of St. John Baptist's birth, rather than the day of his death; because the very circumstances of St. John Baptist's birth (as we read them at length in St. Luke's Gospel) were so full of miracle, so full of witness to Christ, that, even yet unborn, he was, as it were, the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

St. John Baptist was the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, of whom the former was a priest, the latter also of the daughters of Aaron. So that he was, by birth, of the number of God's priests. Of the piety of his father and mother holy Scripture thus speaks:—"They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Hitherto "they had no child, because

that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years." It was at this time that God was pleased to make known to Zacharias His gracious purpose towards him. The angel Gabriel appeared unto him as he was in the temple, engaged, as priest, in the solemn office of burning incense before God, while the people prayed without; and made known unto him, not only that he should have a son in his old age, but that that son should be the forerunner and herald of the Messiah; that in him should be fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi; that he should be that "voice crying in the wilderness;" that "messenger" of God, who should prepare God's way before Him; that presence of Elijah, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."—"The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go

before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." And when, upon this, Zacharias doubted, and said, "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years," a sign was given him, (which was at once a sign, and a reproof of his unbelief,) "Thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believedst not my words."

It was in the sixth month from this, that the same angel Gabriel was sent unto the Blessed Virgin Mary, to announce unto her God's singular favour towards her, in her miraculous conception. Upon this we read, that "Mary (being now "with child of the Holy Ghost," bearing within her blessed womb her divine Son and Saviour) arose in those days, and . . . entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth." And hereupon was fulfilled the word of the angel concerning St. John Baptist, that he should "be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." Even within his mother's womb, the holy babe (the future forerunner of Christ) felt and acknowledged his Sa-

viour's presence. "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost." The unborn babe in his mother's womb felt, and was glad at, the presence of his yet unborn Saviour.

From this we pass on to his birth and circumcision, upon which, when he had received his name John, (i. e. the grace or gift of the Lord,) God removed the dumbness of his father Zacharias, "and his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue was loosed, and he spake, and praised God."

And here we may note, how that two of the divine hymns which the Church uses daily at Morning and Evening Prayer, were spoken at the first on occasion of St. John Baptist. One, the hymn of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which she spake, moved thereto by the Holy Ghost, when Elisabeth, full herself also of the Holy Ghost, pronounced her blessed. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." And the other, the hymn of Zacharias, when, upon the name being given to his son, St. John Baptist, he too was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people. . . . And thou,

child, (and herein he is speaking of St. John Baptist, and of his office and ministry unto Christ,) shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people, for the remission of their sins. . . .”

These miracles, as we read, moved men's minds, and caused them to give greater heed to the future life of the child, who had been thus born out of the course of nature. “And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad, throughout all the hill-country of Judæa. And all they that heard them, laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be?”

Of the childhood of St. John Baptist, we have few and short notices, but they are all-important; they mark God's providential care over him, and his growth in grace: “The hand of the Lord was with him,” “and the child grew, and waxed strong in (the) Spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.” As he had been filled with the Holy Ghost, in and from his mother's womb, so was his early life an outward preparation for the ministry unto which God had called and set him apart. He was to

be the forerunner of Christ, a preacher of repentance unto an evil and corrupt age ; he was to rebuke sin as in God's name, from the sin of the king unto the sin of the lowest of the people ; the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees ; the violence of the soldiers ; the unjust gain and extortion of the Publicans ; and so he grew up and lived apart from men in the desert, a lonely and austere life ; holding, it may be, closer communion with God, and guided and brought up, it may be, more entirely by His good Spirit, than in cities and dwellings of men. His was to be a severe and awful, as well as a joyful, message. He was indeed to herald his Saviour's coming, and to proclaim that the Kingdom of God was at hand ; but the other part of his charge had in it a call to a hard and painful duty ; his preaching was, "Repent ye," his baptism, a "baptism of repentance." And so God brought him up in the desert, in austere and self-denying ways, that so he might not shrink from his task, either for fear of man, or for worldly pleasure. Our Lord* says of him, that he came "neither eating bread nor drinking wine."

And, when he was about thirty years old, "the word of God came unto him in the wilderness ;" and he began his ministry, "preaching in the

wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." So that, even outwardly, his dress and manner was that of Elijah, of whom also we read, that "he was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins."

And here we may observe, that, although St. John Baptist was, as we have read, "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb," and even before his birth marked out for his high office by the angel Gabriel, yet many years, as many as thirty, passed away before the time of his ministry was fully come. He both waited patiently until the word of God came to him in some divine way, and passed the time in a severe and retired life. Would we, when called by God to bear witness for Him by word or in life, do so faithfully and earnestly, as did St. John Baptist, we must be content, with him, to bide God's time, and day by day, and year by year, through His grace, to form within ourselves true and right tempers and dispositions; to exercise ourselves in acts of obedience, self-denial, and retirement; that so, unto whatever task God may call us by

His providence, we may be found ready and faithful. True-hearted obedience, such as God requires, uniform and consistent conduct, especially under trials such as our relations and circumstances bring with them, is not of to-day or yesterday's growth, is not the result of strong and passing feelings, but is the slow but certain fruit of patient continuance in well-doing, the growth of many years, the result, it may be, of many struggles ; even the very chiefest of God's saints, (St. John Baptist, the forerunner of His Son ; St. Paul, His chosen vessel to bear His name to the Gentiles,) even they, upon whom rested the very chiefest gifts of God's Holy Spirit, required time, and discipline, and retirement, before they were fully meet for the work unto which God purposed them.

It now remains to speak of his ministry and of his death.

Thus, then, we read in St. Luke's Gospel: "The word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness, and he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,

make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth ; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Thus in him was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." And the prophecy of Malachi, "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me." "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord ; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

St. John was "the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness ;" the messenger of the Lord ; sent in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare His way before Him. And such was his preaching, such his baptism. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For it was by this preaching of repentance that he was to prepare the way of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. And most real, most practical, was the repent-

ance which he preached ; warning men of sin and danger ; warning them not to trust to any outward state of privilege ; warning them of the near approach of God's judgments ; and calling them to break off their sins and repent ; calling each man to break off his own sins, and to do works of righteousness and charity.

“Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father ; for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees : every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.”

And to each man he spake words of warning ; to each man he gave the lesson which he needed ; rebuking the dishonest gains of the publican, the violence and oppression of the soldier.

“Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” And all this because of the near approach of the coming of the Lord. “And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable.”

But St. John Baptist was even yet more highly favoured. He was called to baptize the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In a spirit of deep humility St. John Baptist shrank from the office; yet it was the will of God that he should execute it, should baptize the Son of God, should hear the voice of God the Father speak-

ing from heaven, should see the descent of God the Holy Ghost like a dove upon Him.

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

And, as St. John Baptist thus baptized our Lord, so also did he bear his witness to Him, as the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. Thus we read in St. John's Gospel: “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto Him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: . . . but He that hath sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and

remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record that This is the Son of God !”

Such was St. John Baptist's ministry, such his preaching, such his baptism, such His witness unto Christ. And he was faithful in his preaching and ministry, constant to speak the truth, bold to rebuke vice, and patient to suffer for the truth's sake.

And thus it was that he met with his death in the way of duty. It was because he constantly spake the truth, boldly rebuked vice, that he was called to suffer for the truth's sake ; to suffer, and at the last to die a martyr, for God and for His truth. As a prophet of God, as sent by God to preach repentance, St. John Baptist rebuked the sin of the king with no less boldness than the sin of the common man. Herod had taken unto him his brother's wife, and St. John Baptist rebuked him for his sin, and thus brought on himself the bitter hatred of the adulteress. Thus we read, “ For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him

as a prophet. But when Herod's birth-day was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus."

Thus was St. John Baptist called by God, not only to prepare the way of the Son of God our Saviour by preaching of repentance, not only to baptize our Lord, and to witness of Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, but also to suffer for Him and for His truth; to suffer at the hands of a wicked king and an adulterous woman, whom he had offended by his constancy in speaking the truth, by his boldness in rebuking vice.

These, then, are the lessons for us to learn from to-day's Festival of St. John Baptist. To

listen to his preaching, and to repent us truly of our sins ; to follow his doctrine and holy life ; constantly to speak the truth ; and (when we are called upon by age, or station, or office,) boldly to rebuke vice ; and (should God so will) patiently to suffer for the truth's sake. Which may God give us grace to do, for His dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. PETER'S DAY.

THE GRACES AND FAILINGS OF ST. PETER.

MATT. iv. 18—20. *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him.*

I PURPOSE this day, which was the day of his martyrdom, to discourse to you of St. Peter the apostle; and to put together such passages of holy Scripture as speak of his life and character; that so we may learn from it such practical lessons as are suited to our state. The memory of the just is blessed and precious before God. Nor can we better do honour to our Lord, than by dwelling with reverence on what we read, in holy Scripture, of the life and character of a saint so eminent, of an apostle so approved by our Lord, as St. Peter. And, if in it there be pas-

sages which speak of human weakness, the more will it be suited to warn and to teach us; the less danger will there be of our being tempted to take as our all-perfect pattern any other than our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh.

St. Peter was born at Bethsaida, a town on the shore of the sea of Galilee; his father was called Jona, and his brother Andrew,—his own name at the first was Simon; both he and his brother Andrew were by trade fishers; they appear to have usually lived at Capernaum, another town on the side of the same lake; St. Andrew was a disciple of St. John Baptist, and so, perhaps, was St. Peter.

The occasion that first brought St. Peter to our Lord was this: St. John Baptist had witnessed of our Lord as He walked, "Behold, the Lamb of God;" and two of his disciples, who heard him, upon that followed Jesus; and, being come to the place where He dwelt, abode with Him that day. "One of the two . . . was Andrew . . . he first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias . . . the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone;" i.e.

beside his old name, Simon, our Lord here gave him a new name; and the meaning of that new name (which is Cephas in the Syriac, and Peter in the Greek,) was a rock, or stone.

After this, it would seem, both Peter and Andrew returned, for a time, to their trade as fishers, until our Lord called them to be His companions, as we read in the text; "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed Him:" or, as we read in St. Luke's Gospel, who adds the miracle which our Lord then worked; "And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your

nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him."

Such was the great faith, great humility, great self-denial of Simon Peter. Great faith, when he said, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." Great humility, when "he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man,

O Lord." Great self-denial, when he, and they, "forsook all, and followed Him."

From this time of his call, St. Peter remained with our Lord as His disciple; and was with Him during the time that He preached, and worked many great miracles in Galilee, and, among them, healed Simon Peter's wife's mother of a fever.

Afterwards, when our blessed Lord, after a whole night past in solemn prayer to God, chose from out the number of His disciples twelve, whom also He named apostles, and sent them to preach and work miracles in His name, St. Peter and St. Andrew were chosen to be of that "glorious company."

Again, certain of the apostles were suffered to be more with our Lord, to draw nearer to Him than others; and on all such occasions St. Peter was one. Thus it was to St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. James, and St. John, that our Lord discoursed privately, on the Mount of Olives, on the signs of His coming, in the destruction of Jerusalem, and at the end of the world. Again, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John alone were suffered to be with our Lord when He raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus; when He was transfigured on the mount; and,

again, at His agony in the garden; being thus admitted, as it were, to a nearer view of His Godhead, and of His Manhood: from the brightness of His glory on the mount, learning that He was perfect God; from His bitter agony in the garden, learning that He was perfect Man.

But there are also many other places of holy Scripture in which special mention is made of St. Peter,—of his great faith, and great earnestness, and great love for our Saviour. Thus, in St. John's Gospel, after our Lord's discourse concerning the Bread from heaven, and the spiritual eating of His Flesh and drinking of His Blood, it is written: "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God." Words which set forth a sure faith and earnest purpose to abide by Christ, at a time when many were offended, and fell away, and left Him.

Again, there is the same, or even yet fuller confession of faith in St. Matthew's Gospel c. xvi., (which has been read as the Gospel for the day,) in which St. Peter again makes answer for all the

apostles, to the question which our Lord put to all; his earnest temper not waiting for others to speak, but causing him to speak both for himself and for them. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said unto Him, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And upon this our Lord pronounced him blessed, in that so great faith could have come from no other but God, by the teaching of His Spirit. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona (son of Jona): for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." And upon this our Lord made unto him great promises, and assured unto him great powers, (the same powers which He after assured to all the apostles, and bestowed upon all them after His resurrection): "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of hea-

ven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

In its highest sense, the rock upon which the Church is builded, is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God made man; in its highest sense, it is upon Him alone, (as upon a rock,) and upon the confession of a true faith in Him, that the Church is builded. But there is a lower sense, in which it may truly be said to be builded upon St. Peter and the other apostles, as St. Paul said to the Ephesians: "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." And this, inasmuch as it was the will of our Lord, that His Church should be gathered into one, from both Jews and Gentiles, by the labours of His apostles; and in a special manner, as we read in the Acts, by the labours of St. Peter. And so again,—in that His Church is the kingdom of heaven upon earth; and in that it is holy Baptism which admits into His Church, and the sentence of excommunication which casts out of it; and in that it was to St. Peter and to the other apostles that our Lord at the first gave commission to baptize, to bind and to loose, to remit and to retain sins;—the promise here made

was truly fulfilled to St. Peter and to the other apostles ; the keys of the kingdom of heaven were truly given to him and to them ; i. e. they received power,—not power to pass on any the eternal sentence, that may not be changed, of life or death ; for that sentence no man can pass on his brother ; that final sentence Jesus Christ alone will pass on all in the great day ; but they received power, true and spiritual power,—both to admit into the Church by holy baptism, and to shut out of the Church by excommunication. And this power to admit, St. Peter exercised on the day of Pentecost, when “they that gladly received his word were baptized ; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls . . . And the Lord added unto the Church daily such as should be saved.” Nor are instances wanting in holy Scripture of the exercise of that other power to shut out both evil livers and false teachers ; even as St. Paul, in awful words, speaks more than once of having delivered unto Satan, (and so cast out of the Church of Jesus Christ,) men of unclean lives, and blasphemers of the true faith. The promises, therefore, made to St. Peter, and the spiritual powers assured to him, (of which we have read in this day's Gospel,) must not be so understood as made and assured to him alone,

but as made and assured to him and to all the apostles with him ; in that upon them also, after their measure, the Church was builded, as upon its foundation ; unto them also the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given, with power to receive into it, and to cast out of it, when our Lord, after His resurrection, breathed upon them, and caused them to receive the Holy Ghost, and sent them in His name, with power to remit and to retain sins ; and after them, in the measure which the Church needs, were these gifts continued to their successors.

And, as these places set forth the great faith and great earnestness of St. Peter, so another place sets forth his humility. When our Lord, at His last Supper, "began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh He to Simon Peter, and Peter said unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." At the first, such was his humility, that

he doubted, and refused to suffer our Saviour to humble Himself to the task of washing his feet ; but after, when he heard that thus only could he have part with his Saviour, he thought it not enough that his feet should be washed, but also his hands and his head ; that so every part of his body might receive cleansing and blessing from the hands of our Saviour and from His washing.

But, as I said, to-day has also its lessons of warning. We have read of the faith, earnestness, humility, love of St. Peter ; but we read also of his rashness, self-confidence, weakness of faith, even to the denial of his Lord and Saviour. No doubt it becomes us to use great reverence in speaking of the holy apostle, even of his faults and failings. Still, again, no doubt these also are written in holy Scripture for our admonition. No doubt it is our duty to take warning from his fall, even as it is our duty to imitate, so far as we can, the singular graces of his character. There is one other instance, besides his denial of our Lord, earlier in the gospel, in which his faith failed him ; and this, no doubt, should have taught him not to be rash and hasty to make professions of his faith, but to distrust himself,—to distrust his present good feelings, however strong they might seem. When our Saviour came unto His

disciples walking upon the sea, we read that "they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, he cried saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" No doubt this should have taught him his own weakness, should have been a lesson and warning to him, against the time of his great trial. And on that sad and awful night, when his great trial came, and he failed, it was not through want of warnings, of many and solemn warnings. Three several times he made professions, three several times our Lord warned him. Three several times did he make professions: "I will lay down my life for Thy sake;" "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and death;" "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended. . . . Though I should die with Thee,

yet will I not deny Thee." Three several times did our Lord warn him. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice." And again, in the garden, three several times did our Lord return to His disciples, and each time did He find them, not watching and praying, but sleeping; "and He saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And yet, after all this, Simon Peter did indeed draw his sword, and smite the servant of the high-priest; but very soon he and "all forsook Him and fled;" and, when he entered into the palace of the high-priest, it was but to deny Him,—three several times to deny with an oath his Lord and Saviour, at the very time when that Lord and Saviour was about to yield up His life for him. Alas! how great is the weakness that lies hid in the hearts even of earnest-minded men, unknown even to themselves, and known only unto God. The same Peter, who had forsaken all to follow Christ, who, when others were offended and went no more after Him, had said, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" the same Peter now "for-

sook Him and fled." He, who had witnessed a good confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," the same now denied Him through fear of men. Surely we all have a solemn warning in what befell one so far above us as St. Peter. If he could fall, who shall say of himself that he shall stand sure? Indeed, we do not know ourselves, we do not know what is in us, what weakness and cowardice, until we are tried. How should we? Therefore let us take warning by the example of others; and, when we read of the sins and failings even of God's saints, let us take heed unto ourselves.

Time would fail us, were we to go through what more we read in holy Scripture of St. Peter. How that, when our Lord looked upon him, just as he had denied Him, "Peter went out and wept bitterly." How that our Lord appeared to St. Peter, apart from the others, on the very day on which He rose from the dead, perhaps to assure him of His forgiveness. How three several times He inquired of him, Whether he loved Him; and three several times gave him a charge to feed His sheep and His lambs. "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I

love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep."

We read again, in the Acts of the Apostles how that, by the preaching of St. Peter, God opened a door of faith unto the Jews, on the day of Pentecost; and unto the Gentiles, in the case of Cornelius; in both of which St. Peter was His special instrument. How by St. Peter God wrought many and great miracles, even unto the raising of the dead. How, when Herod sought his life, God sent His angel and delivered him out of prison. Time would fail me, were I to go through these and other passages. Enough, however, has been said to furnish matter for useful meditation. Only this I will add, which we learn from early writers. That when St. Peter, at Rome, came, as on this day, to his martyrdom, and was about to be

nailed to the cross, he entreated of the heathen officers that he might be crucified with his head downwards; saying, that he was not worthy to suffer death in the same manner in which his Divine Lord and Saviour had died for him. He had preached the Cross of Christ in his life; by it he had been crucified to the world, and the world crucified unto him; and he shrunk not from it, at the last, through any fear of pain and death; only, in his deep humiliation, he accounted that death of shame and agony, which his Lord had died, as too blessed and too glorious for His servant to die.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. JAMES'S DAY.

THE FRUITS OF PROMPT OBEDIENCE.

ST. MATT. iv. 21, 22. *And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him.*

THE Church hath appointed this day to be observed in memory of the holy apostle St. James; in order that, by dwelling upon the graces which God was pleased to make manifest in his character, we may magnify and bless God's holy name, in this memorial of His servant; and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the steps wherein he walked, and, with him, all "the glorious company of the apostles." These are the thoughts which are suited to the festival-day of a great apostle and martyr,—these the lessons, this the spiritual improvement, which we are to seek to draw for ourselves.

And here, in order to this improvement and growth in Christian grace, I would wish to set before you, in a very few words, the sum of what we read in holy Scripture about St. James. You will all, probably, remember that there were two of our Lord's apostles, who bore the name of St. James ;—one, whose name is joined with that of St. Philip on one festival-day, who was the first bishop of Jerusalem, and who wrote the Epistle which bears his name ; and the other, the holy martyr whom we bear in mind to-day, who, to distinguish him from the other, is known by the name of St. James the Greater, whereas the other is called St. James the Less.

St. James, then, (that is, St. James the Greater, whose festival it is to-day,) was the son of Zebedee, and brother of St. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ. Of the circumstances of his call we read in the text : “ And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets ; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him.” A very remarkable instance of cheerful, ready, and unhesitating obedience to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ. “ He called

them, and"—it would seem, without any delay, without any drawing back, without any excuse; at the sacrifice of their feelings, their comforts, their worldly interest; at the sacrifice even of their dearest and most cherished affections—"they immediately [left all] left the ship and their father, and followed Him." And this ready and cheerful obedience to our Blessed Lord's call would seem to be the great and chief lesson which the Church would have us learn from this day's festival. Such, at least, is the Christian grace which she teaches us to pray for, in an especial manner, in the Collect: "Grant, O merciful God, that, as Thine holy apostle St. James, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay was obedient to the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him; so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow Thy holy commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And surely, Christian brethren, there are no times, there are no occasions, there are no persons, in the Christian Church, in which, and to whom, this example of prompt and ready obedience is unnecessary, or without its very great and manifold uses.—We are all too apt to take for granted, that there was something in the case

of the first disciples of our Lord, and, indeed, generally in the whole circumstances of the early Church, so different from our own case, and so entirely unlike our own circumstances, that—although we bear the same name of Christians, are members of the same Church, followers of the same Saviour, baptized with the same baptism, fed with the same spiritual food, hold the same faith, and look for the same promises,—yet that, after all, there is something, we know not what, in our condition, which exempts and frees us from the trials and temptations, removes from us the warnings of the New Testament; renders self-denial, and watchfulness, and indifference to this world, and the being weaned from pleasures and comforts, and the being prepared for pain and affliction and evil, (however necessary they may have been in those early times for all Christ's true and sincere followers,) yet unnecessary for us now; or, rather, in no sense *so* necessary now as then. Now all this can be no other than error on our part. The very fact that the Church, at the same time that she holds in high esteem and reverence the sacred memory of the apostles, martyrs, and confessors of Jesus Christ, teaches us to strive to walk in their steps, and to follow their examples, and, as on this day, puts into our

month the prayer, that God may give us grace, so to walk and follow Christ, as they walked and followed Him ; this one fact of the mind of the Church in this matter, continued unto this very day, may assure us that, although times and outward occasions, and mere circumstances, may have changed ever so much, still that, as Christians, we have the same duties, the same obedience to render, the same temptations and trials to withstand, as the very first followers of our Blessed Lord ; and so have need of the same divine aid of the Holy Ghost the Comforter ; and have occasion, on our own part, for the exercise of the same obedience, submission, and self-denial. We may not be called upon, at this day, according to the usual course of God's providence, to leave our father and mother, yet is it true, that "whosoever loveth father and mother more than Christ, is not worthy of Christ." We may not be called upon now to resign up our usual occupation and means of livelihood, wherever such is in itself honest and useful ; yet are we bound, as Christians, to be prepared, should the time ever come, to take up our cross, and to follow Christ ; otherwise we cannot be His disciples ; for such, like St. James, having an honest heart, and a single eye, and one only

object in this life, "forsaking all worldly and carnal affections," are "evermore ready" (or, at the least, evermore pray and strive that they may be found ready,) "to follow His holy commandments," that, as they have learnt to call Him Lord, Lord, so they may obey His voice, and do the things which He hath commanded.

And this ready obedience of St. James to our Lord's call would seem to have been not without its reward even in this life. It was in itself a high and divine thing to be called to the place and office of an apostle; to be, as it were, among the foundation-stones of the holy temple of Christ's Church. But St. James received even more than this,—he was blessed, above many others, with our Lord's confidence, and admitted to a nearer view, as it were, of his Divine Lord and Saviour's person and ministry. On occasion of the very remarkable miracle in the raising of the daughter of Jairus,—on the mount of the Transfiguration,—in His mysterious Agony in the garden,—St. James was selected (together with his brother, St. John, and St. Peter,) to be a witness of His Almighty power, of His more than human glory, of His more than human agony. And may we not reverently trace, in this appointment of our blessed Lord, the re-

ward which St. James received thus early for his ready and glad obedience? Surely "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

And so again in the event of which we have just read, from the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, appointed as the epistle for the day. St. James should seem thus early to have received the reward of faith and obedience. He was the first of the apostles upon whom our Lord bestowed the crown of martyrdom; the first, after our blessed Lord, to drink of His cup (of suffering and of death), to be baptized with His baptism (of blood). This he had undertaken to do, when as yet he knew very little, if anything, of its meaning; and our Lord granted that which he, unknowing what it was, yet readily undertook to do or to suffer. And his name, and his memory, and his example, live yet in the Church of God;—an apostle of Jesus Christ, among the first called to the ministry, and the first called by martyrdom to his reward. How great is the excellence, how great the dignity, how exceedingly great, of God's mercy, is the reward of single-minded obedience; to what great things may it not lead! Oh! may we never shrink back from following Christ, and doing His holy will; may no temporal regards

(neither pleasure, interest, affection, sloth, fear, self-love,) ever cause us to refuse to hear and to obey His voice, and so to fall short of our reward. Every appointment of His gracious providence is His call, is His voice; let us pray to God that we may obey it. Does it call us to poverty, pain, loss of friends, disgrace, want? It is the same call which He once addressed to His apostles, and which they obeyed. To be poor and despised for Christ's sake; to labour and suffer hardships for the good of others; to be resigned in sickness and pain; to be patient and cheerful when God removes from us those we love;—this is our duty; this our trial; this Christ's call to us, if need and occasion be, to forsake all, and to follow Him.

And He who once promised to His apostles—
 “Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,”—hath also left this other promise for His Church throughout all generations:
 “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit ever-

lasting life." Surely this is a blessed promise to us, and very full of comfort; a promise such as may well encourage us to put up with, and to bear, the trials, and self-denials, and hardness of a religious life, not alone with patience, but with cheerfulness. Whatever we may be called upon to give up, that our Lord Jesus Christ will restore an hundredfold; and with it He will bestow upon us that His best and highest gift, even eternal life. Let us then learn to dwell and to meditate upon the unspeakable greatness and blessedness of what our Lord hath prepared for His true and faithful disciples. And thus shall we, please God, be confirmed and strengthened to do or to suffer His will; to leave all, if so be, and to follow Him. Whatever is of earth, is but for a time; its riches, its interests, its joys, its pleasures, pass away, and are as if they had never been; and so its trials, its sorrows, its distresses, sharp and keen as they may seem at the moment, yet all come to an end at death, if not before; whereas, whatever God hath provided for them that love Him, whatever Jesus Christ hath laid up in heaven for His own, are everlasting. And how much is contained in that one word! How did it nerve the early Christians to suffer! How did they take to

themselves the words of St. Paul: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Surely these are thoughts well suited to this day, wherein we commemorate the holy apostle, so early called, not alone to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, but also to suffer for Him; to drink of His cup (of suffering), to be baptized with His baptism (of blood). He, by God's grace, obeyed that first call to be a disciple,—“leaving his father, and all that he had, without delay, he was obedient to the calling of Jesus Christ, and followed Him;” and so God counted him worthy of that second call, to be a martyr for Christ, and gave him strength and grace to obey, and to follow that call also, and so, the first of the apostolic company, to enter into his rest and receive his crown. May we learn from him, and, after our measure, follow his pattern. May we, as becomes Christian persons, “forsake all worldly and carnal affec-

tions, and be evermore ready to follow" God, and to keep and to do "His holy commandments." This is our plain duty, this it is unto which we are called by our Christian profession. And if, by God's grace, we be careful and watchful to do this, in the daily duties and daily trials of life; if we make duty, and conscience, and the will of God, our rule of life,—not ease, or comfort, or riches, or any interest or affection even of this life,—then we may trust that God will yet further help us onwards in our path; that we may still go from strength to strength, from lesser to greater duties; from lesser to greater self-denials, until we be fitted, if God so will, even to suffer for God, and for His truth; and, like the blessed apostle, to drink of Jesus Christ's cup, and to be baptized with His baptism. But this is a height of grace not to be attained at once, but, if at all, by slow degrees; by lowly, and humble, and dutiful obedience to God's calls, in lesser matters; by such self-denials as He puts into our hearts to use, in the details of daily life; by taking up and bearing our cross, and by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. Such is the Christian course, in its earlier stages,—such is God's earlier call to us; and blessed indeed are we, if we so listen to and obey that

ST. JAMES'S DAY.

earlier call, as to be counted worthy at the last of that higher call, to leave all, if so be, and to suffer all, for Christ's sake; even as the holy apostle of this day was called, at the first to be a disciple, then to be an apostle, and at the last to be a martyr for Christ.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

MISSIONS OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

Ps. xix. 4. *Their line is gone out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.*

THESE words of David (wherein he would seem to speak, in the first place, of the witness which the whole creation, the works of God, bear to their Creator : “ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world”) are by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, ch. x., applied to the preaching of the gospel by the apostles ; and therefore was this Psalm, the sixteenth, from early times, set apart for the festival-days of the holy apostles ; even as the early fathers of the Church, who had learnt in all

things to trace Christ and His Church, were used to expound it of their preaching, and of their witness to the gospel. And thus the words of the text may preface what I have to say concerning the life and labours of St. Bartholomew.

Now that St. Bartholomew was of the number of the twelve, was one of "the glorious company of the apostles," we have the express witness of holy Scripture; and that, (as one of the twelve,) he "continued" with our Lord "in His temptations;" waited on His ministry; heard His discourses; saw His miracles; was a witness to His resurrection and ascension; received His commission to preach His gospel, to baptize in His name, to consecrate and offer up the holy Eucharist, to absolve, to confirm, to ordain; we have the express witness of holy Scripture, that St. Bartholomew had, and exercised, all these. But it is not so certain that we have in holy Scripture express and separate mention of St. Bartholomew; although, on a comparison of passages, it would seem in the highest degree probable; and, as such, has been received by nearly all Christian writers.

It has been generally believed that St. Bartholomew is the same as Nathaniel, of whom we read in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel;

and this for many reasons. Nor need the difference of name cause any difficulty. For *Bartholomew* is not, strictly speaking, a proper name, but a name taken from the father, *Bar*, in the Hebrew tongue, meaning, 'a son of;' and so *Bartholomew* will mean son of *Tholomew* or *Tholmai*, even as *Bartimæus* means son of *Timæus*, and *Bar-Jonah* means son of *Jonah*. And so, there will be no more difficulty in this apostle being called, at once, *Nathaniel* and *Bartholomew*, i. e., *Nathaniel* son of *Tholomew*, than there is in another apostle, *Peter*, being called at once, *Simon* and *Barjonah*, i. e. *Simon*, son of *Jonah*. Setting aside then this apparent difference of names, as really no difficulty, we will consider the reasons which exist for thinking *St. Bartholomew* and *Nathaniel* to be one and the same person.

They are as follows :—The three evangelists *St. Matthew*, *St. Mark*, and *St. Luke*, make express mention of *St. Bartholomew*, as one of the twelve apostles, but they make no mention whatever of *Nathaniel*. Again, the other evangelist, *St. John*, makes mention, more than once, of *Nathaniel*, but makes no mention at all of *St. Bartholomew*. Then again, the three evangelists *St. Matthew*, *St. Mark*, *St. Luke*, (and, after them,

the early Christian writers,) join together St. Philip and St. Bartholomew; even as St. John, in his first chapter, makes St. Philip to be the person who first brought Nathaniel into the presence of Christ. "The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. And Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel saith unto him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the

angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Thus (if we are right in taking St. Bartholomew and Nathaniel to be one and the same person), we have, in this place, our Lord's own witness to the holy apostle, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;" a true and single-hearted son of Israel, of him who was "a plain man;"—and we have the example of that ready faith, that simple trust in God, which are among the blessed fruits of a guileless spirit. They who have a single eye, best see God; they who have a single mind, best follow God: deceit, hypocrisy, worldly thoughts and cares, worldly wisdom, these are the things which shut out God, and make men averse to see, and to follow, God's leading.

And there is, further, another passage in St. John's Gospel, c. xxi., which would seem to mark Nathaniel as an apostle, and so as the same, probably, with St. Bartholomew. When "Jesus shewed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias, . . . there were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel of Cana of Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples." Now, as we know that all (beside Nathaniel) whose names are given, were apostles, Simon Peter, Thomas, the sons

of Zebedee, St. James, and St. John, it has been thought that Nathaniel also may have been an apostle; and for this reason, further, that (whereas St. John says, "This is now the *third* time that Jesus shewed Himself to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead") the persons to whom our Lord shewed Himself on each of the two former occasions mentioned by St. John, were, without question, His apostles and none other.

As regards the life and ministry of St. Bartholomew after our Lord's ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, this is what we gather from the writers of early Church history:—That St. Bartholomew preached the gospel through the barbarous nations of the East, and carried the knowledge of Christ even into furthest India, insomuch that a Christian missionary, nearly two hundred years after, found in those parts persons who retained the Christian faith, and who had among them a portion of the holy Scriptures of the New Testament, the Gospel of St. Matthew, which, together with the Christian faith, they said that their fathers had received from St. Bartholomew. From India he returned to the north-west parts of Asia, where he is said to have again met his

ancient fellow-apostle, St. Philip, at Hierapolis. From this he passed into Lycaonia, (the scene also of the labours of St. Paul,) where he made converts to Christ; in what other countries he preached the gospel we know not; this only we hear, that he bore his last witness for Christ, and suffered martyrdom, in Armenia, being, as some say, crucified; or, as others, flayed alive; or, as is not improbable, being first flayed, and then nailed to the cross. However that may be, he sealed with his blood the witness to Christ which he had borne in his life; he shrunk not from his Master's Cross, but was content to bear it after Him, patiently and cheerfully; and, as we are told, continued to comfort his Christian converts during his last moments.

Blessed and holy is the memory of God's saints, of *all* who have departed this life in His true faith and fear: and thrice blessed the memory of His apostles and martyrs! "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world!" They have sown with their blood the seed of the Church,—their souls are in the hand of God,—they are now resting from their labours, and in the judgment-day, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

May we be careful to learn the lessons which such holy days should teach us : to bless God for the many and singular graces which have shone forth in the lives of His saints : to bless Him also for the mercies which we have received by the preaching of His apostles ; and to set ourselves in earnest to imitate their holy lives and labours of love ; to be followers of them, even as they were followers of Jesus Christ. Also, to continue stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers ; i. e. "to contend earnestly for the faith once (for all) delivered to the saints," the blessed gospel of the grace of God, which the apostles preached ; and to remain humble and teachable members in the communion of the Church, which was builded upon their foundation ; not taking up with new and strange doctrines, not following new and strange teachers ; but by a sound faith, by sacraments duly ministered, by common prayers in the house of God, holding communion with all the saints of God, the living and the dead in Christ. Thus will these holy days, as they come round each year, set us forward in our Christian course, teach us some lesson of holiness which we are to follow, or call to mind some blessing which we have received from God. Thus shall we grow up humble and thankful ;

humble under a sense of our own unworthiness ; thankful for the undeserved mercies which we have received from Almighty God ; taking the saints of God for our example, and seeking to be conformed to them, even as they sought to be conformed unto the one all-perfect pattern, Jesus Christ.

And may not the words of the text, and the example of St. Bartholomew, speak to us of our duty to set forward, so far as we can, by our prayers and by our alms, the missions of the apostolic Church,—that so the gospel, which the apostles preached, may be preached unto the heathen,—that so “their line may [indeed] go out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” Surely no words can fully set forth the greatness of the work. For what is the work which the missions of the Church now, as of old, have in view ? It is this. To set up on earth the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To obey, so far as in us lies, His last command to His apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” To bring to pass, so far as we may, that for which we pray daily in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come.” To call men from darkness to light, from sin and Satan unto holiness and God. This is the work which the mis-

sions of the Church have had in view in all ages, and which, with God's help, they have already in some measure accomplished. Already, blessed be His holy Name, there are many bright and happy spots amidst the darkness of heathenism ; spots where Christ's Church hath been builded up ; where His holy word is preached and His Sacraments ministered ; where His holy day is a day of rest and worship ; and where His holy Name is duly praised and magnified by thousands of devout and faithful men, whose fathers were heathens and worshipped idols. Such fruits the apostolic Church of Jesus Christ is bearing unto her divine Lord and Head, even amidst the dark parts of the earth ; in some places more, in others less, yet some fruits, we trust, in all. And no one can say how good and blessed are such fruits, how acceptable unto God, how dear and precious before Him and His holy angels. Perhaps one could hardly form an idea of the greatness of the change from heathenism unto our holy faith, unless one had lived among the heathens, and had witnessed their daily lives, and the nature of their worship. Then one would have seen all the worst passions of our fallen nature suffered to have their own way,—anger, malice, uncleanness,—suffered to run their course, unrebuked and unrestrained, or (worse

than this) even encouraged by their very religion. Now, could we have lived in a heathen village, and have witnessed this fearful state of unrebuked sin; worship offered up unto cruel and hateful idols; men, women, children, living and growing up in sin, taught to sin by their religion itself, led on and tempted to sin by the priests of their false gods; could we have lived in such a village; and then left it; and, after a few years, returned to it, and found in it the Church of Jesus Christ, and His blessed gospel; how great, how blessed, would be the change! The worship of idols put away; their temples cast down, and the church builded in their stead; the Lord's day a holy and blessed day of rest and peace; the voice of prayer and praise heard in God's house; the Psalms of David in place of idol hymns; holy Baptism, the blessed Sacrament of our new birth; holy Communion, the blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. And then what a change, also, in men's lives, and tempers, and conduct, through the power of the Holy Spirit! No longer proud, fierce, cruel, unforgiving, but meek, lowly, patient, long-suffering; the young no longer trained in ways of uncleanness and impurity, but taught to be pure, chaste, to keep undefiled their baptism-robe of white, and to follow the

pattern of all God's saints, in warring against the sinful lusts of the flesh. Such are the changes which we should witness. And such changes (to God be the praise) do take place at this day. Such changes the missions of the Church are, under God, bringing to pass at this day. And unto such changes we may help, each in his place, by our prayers and by our alms. As then we value our own privileges within the fold of Christ's one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, — as we value His blessed Gospel, — as we value His holy Sacraments, — as we value His holy day, — as we value His ordinances of prayer and praise, — and as we feel for our heathen brethren, the souls for whom also Christ died, the souls for whom His precious Blood was shed, the sheep scattered upon the mountains, whom yet it is the will of the good Shepherd to gather unto Himself, that they, with us, (and perchance by our means,) may be one fold under one Shepherd; shall we not be ready, glad, and thankful, to do what we can, each of us, to bring about this blessed work?

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. MATTHEW'S DAY.

WORLDLY BUSINESS A SCHOOL FOR HOLINESS.

ST. MATTHEW ix. 9. *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom ; and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him.*

SUCH are the few and simple words in which the blessed apostle and evangelist St. Matthew speaks of his own call unto his high and holy office. And very nearly the same words are used by St. Mark and St. Luke, when speaking of the same event ; the latter of whom thus writes : " And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom ; and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him." Wherein we are to note that St. Luke, as also St. Mark, speaks of St. Matthew by his other name of Levi,

and adds these few but striking and affecting words, that "*he left all.*" When Christ called him, St. Matthew at once "left all, rose up, and followed Him."

And such ready obedience unto Christ, even unto the leaving, if necessary, of all things, would seem to be the lesson which the Church would have us learn from this day's festival. Such, at least, is the prayer which she puts into our mouths in the Collect for the day; that "Almighty God, Who by His blessed Son did call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist, would grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same His Son Jesus Christ."

The Church therefore would seem, on the one hand, as at other times, to warn us of the great danger and deceitfulness of riches, and of the hindrance and obstacle which they too often prove to a sincere following of Christ, a sincere and hearty obedience unto His will; and, on the other hand, to exhort and admonish us, by the instance and example of St. Matthew, that the task, although hard, is yet not impossible; that, as the holy apostle was not so occupied by the cares of a busy life, but that he heard Christ's voice; was not so set upon riches, but that he

left all, rose up, and followed Christ ; so may Christians now hear Christ's voice, even in the noise and tumult of the world's business, and may follow Christ even in the path of daily life ; if only they do indeed " forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches," and, whilst they are " not slothful in business," strive also to be found " fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." For this it is to live as Christian persons ought to live, who, whilst they " learn and labour truly to get their own living, and to do their duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call them," know and feel the danger which is in such things, the temptations which worldly cares have in them, and the many awful sentences of holy Scripture which warn us against being ensnared and beguiled by them.

I say, the instance of the apostle St. Matthew may be a stay and support to them whose lot is cast in the midst of the cares and business of life,—so great and so pressing as are those cares in an age and nation like our own,—and who ask, how it is possible to live strict, and holy, and Christian lives, to serve God faithfully, to grow in grace, to nourish religious thoughts and reverential feelings, in the midst of a cold, heartless, and evil generation ; to remain pure with defile-

ment all around them ; to be quiet, and tranquil, and at rest, when all else are disturbed, and anxious, and fretted, and impatient. I say, the instance of the apostle St. Matthew shews us that all this is possible ; or rather, that it is possible for habits, feelings, temper, disposition, such as are meet and suited for the sacred office of an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be formed and cherished, to live and to grow, in a soil to human eyes the most unsuited, amidst the mean, and common, and every-day pursuits of the most despised trade or traffic in which men are engaged.

And surely it were no rash or irreverent thought, that, as Almighty God, in the vast and unsearchable riches of His holy Word, has left warnings, precepts, examples suited to all ages, times, states, conditions of His creatures, so we of this age and country may find our lesson and our example in St. Matthew. His may be a character which it especially behoves us to study and imitate, in that, being by nature frail as we are, blessed with less abundant means of grace than we have, with a less perfect knowledge of God's will and word, and placed in outward circumstances, in a station and rank of life, at the least as full of trials and temptations, as opposed

(humanly speaking) to religious habits, feelings, and conduct, he yet had formed and cherished within him that temper and disposition of heart which made him meet to be called to be an apostle, and at the same time made him, when called, ready at once to leave all, to rise up, and to follow Him who had called him.

St. Matthew was a publican, that is, he was one of a class of persons whom all hated, despised, and spake evil of. The publicans, as you probably know, were Jews employed by the Romans as officers under themselves to collect the taxes and duties, the payment of which they enforced from the Jewish nation. This payment, to a power at once foreign and heathen, was especially hateful to the Jewish nation; and therefore those Jews who consented to act as the servants and officers of the Romans in this matter, were generally hated by their brethren; and in very many instances, possibly, this hatred was increased by the injustice and extortion which they exercised; their situation gave them the means of doing evil, and, where all hated and despised them, too many, probably, used to the full the means of doing evil which they possessed. This, at least, we must all have observed, that the term "publican" is very generally in Holy

Scripture used as a term of reproach, as marking some guilty, unjust, outcast man : "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican." "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye ? do not even the publicans the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ? do not even the publicans so ?" And again, in this very passage : "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners ?"

St. Matthew was one of this despised and hated class of men, brought up, probably, and living in the midst of those who exercised the same calling with himself, but who, too many possibly, exercised it with injustice and violence. St. Matthew had all the trial and temptation of evil example, beside and beyond the common temptations of his station, and yet St. Matthew had so lived, had so schooled and trained his heart and affections, as that Christ called him to be an apostle, and as that he at once obeyed

the call. For we must remember that, although our Saviour both Himself taught and trained His apostles during His ministry, and, after His resurrection and ascension, endued them with singular gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, yet that there must have been something in their character at the very time of their call which moved, so to speak, our Lord to call them, and led them at once to obey His call. Surely there was already, by God's grace, in its degree, the honest and good heart, the simple and confiding faith, the keen impulses, the warm and affectionate feelings, such as afterwards, when purified, and chastened, and confirmed by the teaching and example of Christ present with them, by the divine power and work of the Holy Ghost descending on them on the day of Pentecost, by the patient suffering for Christ which they bore, formed, in its full outline and lineaments, the sacred apostolic character.

Their very cheerful obedience to Christ's call, their very readiness to follow Christ, and become His disciples first, that so they might be His apostles afterwards,—might first know, and obey and learn of Christ themselves, and then preach Him unto others,—their very readiness so to follow Christ was, in some sort, a proof and sign

that they were, in a measure, meet for their office.

For consider, had St. Matthew (living in the midst of the world's business, and engaged in a worldly office himself,) had his heart, his thoughts, feelings, wishes, been merely worldly, merely set on the riches, pleasures, or interests of this world, —I will not say, would Christ have called such an one to follow Him, to be His disciple, to receive, to preach, to suffer for the faith?—but would there have been any thing in his character to lead him at once to obey Christ, to leave those worldly comforts, those worldly riches and pleasures, on which his heart was set, and wherein his life had been spent?—to leave all these, and to become the follower of a despised and persecuted Master, through much discomfort, privation, and, possibly, actual suffering? What was there that would lead a man of mere worldly feelings and worldly motives so to act? Christ's kingdom was not of this world; its greatness, its joys, its rewards, were in another world; it was the kingdom of heaven. And then those joys, and those rewards, so pure, so holy, so spiritual, how would they affect a merely worldly and carnal heart? Even if present, would they not be tame and distasteful to such an one?

Of this we may be sure, that, although living *in* the world, St. Matthew's thoughts were not *of* the world, St. Matthew's heart was not set *on* the world. He had had holy and blessed thoughts even in the midst of the world's business, he had cherished pure affections and earnest strivings after the things of a better life than that in the midst of which he was living ; amid the din and noise of the world he had heard God's voice, whether in the holy Scriptures of the Old Testament or in his own conscience, and so he could hear, and recognise, and obey the voice of the Son of God, when He called him.

There is then no station or condition of life, no necessary business, provided only it be not evil and wrong in itself, but that those who are engaged in it may exercise themselves, at the same time, in the duties of religion and piety, and so, by God's help, form true Christian habits of thought, of feeling, of conduct. Almighty God has not so ordered it as that any man's state of life, unto which He has called him, shall, of itself, and of necessity, shut him out from the duties, the graces, or the comforts of religion.

Doubtless, particular stations and ranks have their particular trials and temptations, and offer particular hindrances and obstacles to a godly, a

righteous, or a sober life; and they are indeed in danger who have riches, or are engaged in procuring them. Holy Scripture is full of warning to such, as in the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." And again, our Lord Himself in the gospels: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." And again: "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation." And again, when the young man who had great possessions went away sorrowful, our Lord said, "That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Now, doubtless, these sentences of holy Scripture are a serious warning to us, so many of us as are in any way occupied about riches,—and who is not so occupied, more or less, in this age and country? They are indeed a call to us to join from the heart in the words of this day's collect, that God would "grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to follow His Son Jesus Christ" in

the way of true Christian obedience and service. Yet does the example of St. Matthew teach us that we need not despair; through God's grace and mercy we may overcome even these difficulties. What is impossible with man, is possible with God; and so, again, is possible for man with God's help. No station, no occupation, can exclude the duties of our Christian calling; no necessary cares so fill the heart as to shut out, and leave no room for, the cares of a future life; no outward circumstances, in themselves, check and prevent the growth of the Christian graces in the soul. And this lesson the Church would have us learn, as on this day, from the example of the holy apostle and evangelist St. Matthew.

May we have grace to learn it; may we have grace to walk by faith, not by sight; to have our conversation, our hearts, our treasure in heaven, even when we are forced, by the circumstances of our daily life, and by the duties of our calling, to be engaged in the business of this world; may we never so labour for the meat that perisheth, as that we forget to labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life; may we never be so careful and troubled about many things, as to forget that one thing is needful; may we ever

bear in mind that it shall not profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ; may we ever look to God for what we need, for food and raiment ; may we ever seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Thus may we humbly trust that God will bless and prosper, and sanctify our daily labours, that they may be to us—not occasions of sin, but—a school of Christian graces, wherein we may, ever more and more, both learn and practise our duty towards God, and our duty towards our neighbour.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

ANGELS AND THEIR MINISTRY.

HEB. i. 14. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

THESE words set forth to us the nature and office of the holy angels. Their nature, that they are spirits, not flesh and blood, as we are, but pure spirits. Their office, that they are ministering, sent forth by God to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

And, surely, this may well call up our awe and wonder; that there are beings of a nature far higher and purer than our own, beings who have never sinned against God, never fallen away from God, but have continued to do unto Him true, and faithful, and dutiful service, from the first hour of their creation, and who now do His will in heaven in all things. And that these holy and blessed spirits are yet sent by God to minis-

ter for us, whom He has called to be heirs of salvation. For us, weak and fallen and sinful men, have the holy angels been sent from the highest heaven, to minister. And not only has God been pleased to send His holy angels to minister for us men, but they would seem to execute their work and ministry of love with all joy. We know, from the express words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, how much they feel with us and for us, how keen is their sympathy with all of good or evil that befalls us. Only think, how much is contained in the words, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." What charity, what tenderness, what sympathy with us, even in our fallen estate, that there should be joy in the highest heaven, joy among the holy and blessed spirits, over one sinner that repenteth. How should this teach us to feel one for another. If the holy angels can so feel for us, can so joy over our repentance, how ought not we, much more, to feel one for another, to sorrow for one another's sins, to joy over one another's repentance, forasmuch as we are partakers of one common nature; nay more, have been all baptized into the One Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, have been all made members of

Him, and so, all members one of another, "that the members should have the same care one of another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." So may we learn a lesson of mutual love and charity one towards another, from the keen and tender sympathy of the blessed angels with us men in our trials.

Now it has always been the belief of the Church, that all baptized persons, even the youngest, are set each under the care of some one good angel, whose special work and office it is to watch over the baptized, and to keep him from sin and danger. "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee in their hands, that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone." And it would seem, from our Lord's words in St. Matthew, that even the very highest angels, they who habitually see God, and live in His presence, are yet set in charge of the souls even of the youngest. Thus our Lord speaks: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." Great and unspeakable mercy, that

we, our children, our newly-born and newly-baptized children, have the help of the high, and holy, and blessed spirits, who live for ever in the presence of God! Surely this is an ever-present help against Satan and his evil spirits, to have the good spirits of God by our side, around our bed, around our path; well may we bless and magnify God's holy name for these unseen, but ever-present guardians.

And here it may help us to realize what we are told of the work of the holy angels, to consider what part they hold in the history of the gospel. It was the angel Gabriel who appeared unto Zacharias, and foretold unto him the birth of St. John Baptist. It was the angel Gabriel who was sent unto the blessed Virgin Mary, to announce unto her, that of her should be born, by the power of the Holy Ghost, her divine Son and Saviour Jesus Christ. It was the angel of the Lord who appeared unto Joseph in a dream, and assured him when he was in doubt: "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." It was the angel of the Lord who appeared unto the shepherds, as they were keeping watch over their flocks by night: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good.

tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,"—and not one angel only, but many, full of joy, full of love to man, full of zeal for God's glory. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." And so, again, it was the angel of God, in a dream, who warned Joseph, at the first, to flee into Egypt; and, again, after the death of Herod, to return into the land of Israel. So that we read of the holy angels, and of their ministry, no less than six times in the history of our Lord's birth.

Then, again, the angels are twice spoken of during His ministry. Once, at the very beginning; a second time, at the very end of His ministry. Thus, after His forty days' fast and temptation, we read, "And, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." And again, in His agony in the garden, when He had prayed again and again unto His Father, and "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood," we read, "and there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." All which may be as a pattern of what takes place in our case,—that it is

chiefly in times of severe trial and temptation, or when we are weighed down by sorrow, or when we have prayed again and again, that God visits us with the ministry of His holy angels, and cheers, comforts, and upholds us. Thus the pattern of our Lord would teach us not to expect that help at once ; but to be patient ; to resist temptation, so far as we can ; and to wait God's time to set us free ; to continue instant in prayer, until He be pleased to hear us, and, should He see good, to answer our prayer.

Then, again, we read of the angels as present at, and after, the Resurrection of our Lord: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake ; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow : and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." And again, another angel within the sepulchre : "And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment ; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted : Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified : He is risen ; He is not here : behold the place where they laid Him." And in St.

Luke and St. John, we read of two angels : “ Two men stood by them in shining garments.” “ But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping : and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had lain.” Thus are the holy angels present at the holy sepulchre, present to awe and alarm the enemies of Jesus Christ, present to speak peace and comfort to His disciples, present to guard the sacred spot in which His blessed Body had lain.

And, again, at the Ascension, are the holy angels present, with a message of peace and comfort to the bereaved and sorrowing disciples. “ And, while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

Such was the work and ministry of the holy angels during the time of our blessed Lord’s sojourn here upon earth. Nor did their work and ministry cease when our Lord had ascended up into heaven. We still read of them as present to

deliver, to guide, to comfort the apostles and early disciples.

Thus, in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. iv., we read that, when “the high-priest and all they that were with him had laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison, the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life;” and again, in chap. xii., when “Herod the king . . . had apprehended Peter, he put him in prison, . . . but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And they went out, and passed through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod.”

And not only to deliver from prison, but also to make known to them His will, was God pleased to use the ministry of His holy angels. Thus, when it was His will that the eunuch of Ethiopia should hear the gospel by the preaching of Philip the deacon, we read, chap. viii., that it was by the message of an holy angel that Philip was sent to meet him on his journey: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza." And in chap. x., in the conversion of Cornelius, the first-fruits of the Gentile Church, the angel of the Lord appears to him to warn him to send for the apostle, from whom he was to hear God's message of grace and mercy to him. "Cornelius," we read, "a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway, saw in a vision, evidently about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. . . . He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." And again, in chap. xxvii., when St.

Paul and his company in the ship were in great danger of shipwreck, it was by His holy angel that God gave to him the assurance of safety : “ Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul ; thou must be brought before Cæsar : and, lo, God hath given thee all those that sail with thee.”

Such was the visible work and ministry of the holy angels in the early Church, and among the first disciples of our Lord, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. And that work and ministry still continues. Although unseen by the eye of man, the holy angels of God still do their work of love, still minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. Still the youngest baptized child has a power and presence with him of God’s holy angels, to guard and keep him from sin and danger. Still, day by day, the promise is fulfilled to us and to our children : “ He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee in their hands, that thou dash not thy foot against a stone.”

Surely, then, to meditate on the holy angels, on their nature, on the dutiful service which they

render unto Almighty God in the ministry of love which they exercise for us, may well fill us with devout and awful thoughts of God's greatness, and with grateful thoughts of God's goodness; may well move us to imitate their obedience, that so God's holy and blessed will may be so done by us men on earth, as it is done, sincerely, truly, perfectly, by the holy angels in heaven. Nor is this all: to meditate on the holy angels may well stir up and move our hearts to love one another, may well kindle in us the pure and holy flame of Christian charity; for shall the blessed spirits of heaven feel for us and with us in all our joys and sorrows, and shall not we feel one for another? Shall not each member of Christ's body feel for and with each and every member of the body in weal or in woe? Then, again, to meditate on the holy angels, how may it not cheer and encourage us to resist sin, to be pure and holy in our lives, not to be cast down when we are in danger or trial, but to take courage from the thought that they that are with us are more and stronger than they that are against us; that the holy angels of God are with us to strengthen us against Satan and his evil angels. Surely, so to meditate upon the holy angels of God, whether as they "do God service in heaven," or as

“by His appointment they succour and defend us on earth,” is no vain or unpractical exercise of the soul, but has to do with Christian faith and duty, with love and charity, with trust in God, submission unto His will, and reliance upon His power to save and defend us.

Thus we read, that when a “most learned, most humble, holy man,” whose memory is dear to the Church, Richard Hooker, was on his death-bed; he was found, a few hours before his death, “deep in contemplation, which gave occasion to enquire his present thoughts, to which he replied, ‘That he was meditating the number and nature of angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven; and, oh! that it might be upon earth.’” He, in his last hours, was meditating upon “their blessed obedience and order;” and we may find other truths relating to the holy angels, other lessons suited to our several needs,—lessons of reverence for God, lessons of love and charity for our brethren, lessons of purity and holiness in our most secret recesses, lessons of devotion in God’s house of prayer, lessons of trust in God, and in His power and will to save us in our greatest dangers and in our sorest trials.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. LUKE'S DAY.

THE HISTORIAN OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

2 TIM. iv. 11. *Only Luke is with me.*

TO-DAY we keep holy in memory of the evangelist St. Luke. It will be my endeavour to put together such passages in holy Scripture and Church writers as set forth the life and labours of St. Luke; and then to dwell upon the merciful and gracious providence of Almighty God, in that He hath provided for us and for His Church in all ages, by the means of St. Luke, a record, not only of the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ during His sojourn upon earth, but also of the acts and labours of His holy apostles; that so we may realize the many and great occasions we have on this day for devout thankfulness for the manifold treasures laid up for us in holy Scripture.

St. Luke is said to have been born at Antioch, in Syria, and to have been brought up as a

physician ; so St. Paul calls him, Col. v., " Luke, the beloved physician." It is not clear whether St. Luke was by birth a heathen or a Jew, but it is probable that he was a heathen ; although he may have been a proselyte to Judaism before he became a Christian. Neither is the time of his conversion certain. Some very early writers have thought that he was of the number of the seventy, whom Jesus Christ sent out with the apostles ;—which would also seem to be the mind of the Church, in that the Gospel for the day contains the mission of the seventy, and would hardly apply to St. Luke, unless he were thought to have been one of them ;—others have supposed that he was converted after our Lord's ascension, at Antioch, and by St. Paul ; this, however, is certain, both from holy Scripture and early Christian writers, that St. Luke was a faithful companion of St. Paul, and journeyed and laboured with him during very many years of his ministry.

The place at which he joined St. Paul would seem to have been Troas, and the time, just before St. Paul made his first journey into Macedonia and Greece. Thus we read, Acts xvi. 10, 11 : " And after he had seen the vision, immediately *we* endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called *us* to preach

the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, *we* came with a straight course to Samothracia." From this place, and from this time, St. Luke is thought to have been the constant companion of St. Paul: at any rate, it is clear from other places in this chapter that he was with him in Macedonia; and from chapters xx., xxi., that he went with him his last journey to Jerusalem; and again, from chap. xxvii., that he went with him to Rome. And that St. Luke was with St. Paul at Rome, is clear from passages in more than one epistle. Thus, to Philemon: "There salute thee . . . Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers." And to the Colossians: "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you." And that St. Luke was found faithful to the last, when others failed, is clear from the text, "Only Luke is with me." There is, further, another place in holy Scripture, in which St. Luke is not mentioned by name, but where he is usually thought to be meant, 2 Cor. viii. 18: "We have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the Churches." Which place, if it mean St. Luke, (as is thought, and as the Church would seem to intimate in the collect for the day,) would shew both that St. Luke

was trusted by St. Paul and joined with Titus in his mission, and also that St. Luke was already known and esteemed among the Christians throughout all the Churches. After the death of St. Paul little is known of St. Luke, his life, and labours, save only that he lived to a great old age, and laboured much in divers countries for the gospel, and also suffered much for the name of Jesus Christ, being a confessor of Him, if not a martyr.

Besides the Gospel, St. Luke wrote also the Acts of the Apostles. Both the Gospel and the Acts are addressed to the same person, Theophilus, who, by the title "most excellent," would seem to have been a person of rank. The Gospel is said to have been written and published by St. Luke, with the help and sanction of St. Paul; indeed, certain early writers say that St. Paul refers to this Gospel of St. Luke, and calls it his own, when he says, "according to *my* Gospel." However this may be, the Gospel of St. Luke was written by him with the help of them who had been eye-witnesses to what it relates; who had themselves seen the miracles and heard the discourses of our Lord; had been with Him, and ministered to Him; and it was written, as it should seem, to set

aside certain false and untrue accounts of our Lord, which evil men and false teachers had spread abroad; thus St. Luke himself begins his Gospel: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." Such was the purpose of St. Luke in writing his Gospel; such the human helps which he had: only let us ever remember, that there was in all this a higher and divine purpose, that of God Himself, hereby brought about,—the comfort and teaching of His Church in all ages,—a higher and divine help, that of God the Holy Ghost, guarding from all error, and leading into all truth, the mind and pen of St. Luke. For this we must most surely believe of *all* the books of holy Scripture, that (however they may be, in some sense, the work of men,—men frail and erring in themselves,—yet that) they are also, or rather,

the work of God the Holy Ghost, and so are all-true, all-perfect ; and thus, that the Gospel of St. Luke is not so much the Gospel of St. Luke, or of St. Paul, or of those others, "the eye-witnesses and ministers of the word," as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit of God ; and so is to be received and believed as the word of God, not merely as the word of man.

And what is thus said of the Gospel of St. Luke may be said also of the Acts of the Apostles. St. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles to continue, as it were, the history which he had begun in the Gospel. Thus he himself refers to the Gospel at the very beginning of the Acts of the Apostles : "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up." Almighty God willed that the history of the first years of the Church ; the first preachings of the apostles ; the first deaths of His martyrs ; the first persecutions of the Jews and of the heathens ; the faith, charity, zeal, purity of the early Church, in the days of her first love ; Almighty God willed that these should not pass away and be forgotten, nor the record of these be changed, or corrupted, by human error or human frailty, but consigned for

ever to all ages, as a part of His own word. Thus Almighty God, by His Spirit, guided the first historian of the Christian Church into the truth, and set the first history of the Christian Church among the holy Scriptures, that Christians in all ages might see in the Acts of the Apostles a model of Christian faith, of Christian discipline, and of Christian life; might know what is that apostolical doctrine and fellowship, in which it is our duty and privilege to continue stedfastly, even as it was the duty and privilege of the early Christians.

It is not until we reflect how entire a blank the first years of the Church would be to us, but for what is preserved to us in the Acts of the Apostles, that we in any due measure realize the value of the gift which God, by St. Luke, hath given to us. Only call to mind some few of the many subjects of this book, and thus learn to estimate its witness to the Christian faith and life, such as it once was. The descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; the discourse of St. Peter, (the very first discourse preached in the Church of Jesus Christ;) the unity of the Church, when "they that gladly received His word were baptized, . . . and they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and

in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And all that believed were together, and had all things common." The ordination, first of the deacons, and after, of the elders or priests; the martyrdom of St. Stephen; the mission of the apostles to confirm in Samaria by laying on of hands; Philip and the eunuch; the conversion of St. Paul; the call of Cornelius; the miraculous delivery of St. Peter from prison; the mission of Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles; and all that we read of St. Paul, his preaching, his labours, his journeys, his dangers. Such are some of the varied subjects of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. It need not be said how greatly they confirm our faith as Christians and as Churchmen. Ours is thus shewn to be one with the Church of the holy apostles; to have the same faith, the same sacraments. Would that there were the same holiness of life, the same unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, the same love, the same charity, the same self-denial, the same zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of man. That were to be apostolic indeed, not only to hold the faith which the apostles held, or to minister the sacraments which the apostles ministered; but to live as the apostles lived, to serve God with apostolic

service, to love the brethren with apostolic charity, to chasten ourselves with apostolic self-denial.

And surely to look back to the inspired records of the early Church is our comfort and strength, no less than our duty. We yearn, it may be, for Christian sympathy; or we are cast down as we see so little signs and traces all around us of the Communion of Saints. We are tempted to faint and to despair; to murmur, it may be, because our lot hath not been cast in this or that age, in this or that branch of the Church; as if, in other circumstances, or with other means of grace, we could have discharged our Christian duties and perfected holiness, whereas now we are unable to do so. This is no doubt a common snare and device of our spiritual enemy, whereby to lead us to sloth and indifference: to sloth as regards our own progress in the spiritual life; to indifference as regards God's truth. And thus we too often go on to omit practical duties, grow careless as regards the exercises of self-discipline and self-denial, and lose our keen sense of the great need and necessity of even the least article of our Christian faith.

Now so far as this temper arises from a wrong and sinful despair, it may be a stay and comfort

to study the early history of the Church of Jesus Christ ; to see there what we yearn after realized : purity of faith and purity of life ; zeal for the truth, and fervent charity one towards another. Nor may it be without its use to see that there were trials and scandals even in those early days ; “murmurings,” because some seemed to be “neglected in the daily ministration” of alms ; jealousy and distrust ; and even estrangement for a time between eminent saints of God, such as St. Paul and St. Barnabas. Thus also God would have us to learn our lessons from the times and acts of the apostles ; to look for trials and offences ; to be content, if so be, to be misunderstood and misinterpreted ; in our acts of charity to meet with murmurings where we had looked for thankfulness ; to be viewed with jealousy and suspicion where we feel that our wish and purpose is good and true. Thus may we learn our lessons from the acts of the apostles ; our lesson of hope and our lesson of patience : hope for the future, when we see what the Church once was ; patience under present trials and scandals, when we read of such in the Church even in her best and purest days, even when apostles were her teachers and rulers.

I have had occasion, in speaking of the other

evangelists, to discourse to you of the uses and blessings of the written gospel ; therefore, in discoursing to you of St. Luke, I would turn our thoughts rather to that other book of holy Scripture which, through God's grace, we have received from him. May God give us grace to read the Acts of His holy Apostles, not carelessly, or in a spirit of curiosity, but seriously and solemnly, so as to draw from them their manifold lessons of faith, piety, and duty.

There is one, and one only, pattern for us to follow,—the pattern of the early Church of Jesus Christ ; when the words of the apostles of Jesus Christ were yet fresh in men's ears ; when the graces of the Holy Spirit were shed abroad in men's hearts, and bore fruit in men's lives. Our lot is cast in evil days : all around us is coldness and hardness of heart, unbelief, distrust, profaneness ; men have rent asunder the one body of Jesus Christ, which is the Church ; men deny the one faith, which was once (for all) delivered unto the saints ; and they who should be one are estranged from each other ; still there are times to which we may look back, earlier times of unity, purity, and peace, such as we read of in the Acts of the Apostles : there we may learn our lessons of faith, practice, disci-

pline, and charity ; what we are to believe, what we are to do, how we are to serve God, how we are to love one another. These lessons we may learn from the Acts of the Apostles, and, as we learn them, we shall do well to bless God, who of His great mercy hath provided these lessons for us by the ministry of His servant St. Luke.

And thus, this holy day, as all others, will lead us from man to God, to bless and magnify Him in His saints, for the blessings which we have received by them, from Him, and from the riches of His grace.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE.

DANGERS OF HERESY AND SCHISM.

EPHES. ii. 20. *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.*

THIS day we keep festival in memory of the holy apostles St. Simon and St. Jude. I will proceed to put together what we learn of the lives of these apostles from holy Scripture and from early Church writers. St. Simon is called in St. Matthew's Gospel "Simon the Canaanite," and is thus distinguished from the other Simon, who is better known to us by his other name of St. Peter. Why he was so called is not so clear. Some suppose that he was so called from the town of Cana of Galilee, as being a native or inhabitant of that town. But in St. Luke's Gospel he is called "Simon, called Zelotes," and hence writers of greatest weight have thought that by "the Canaanite," we are not to under-

stand the place where he was born or lived, but that it is a Hebrew word meaning the same as the Greek word Zelotes; and so that St. Matthew, who wrote his Gospel for the Jews, kept the Hebrew word "Canaanite," whereas St. Luke, who wrote for the Gentiles, rendered it by the Greek word "Zelotes." Thus both the Hebrew and the Greek would denote one zealous and earnest in what he professed. We are not told in holy Scripture whether St. Simon had this name of Zelotes before, or only after, his call to be a disciple. If he had the name before his call, it was probably as one of a sect who professed to be zealous for the Lord, and to trace back their origin to Mattathias, the father of Judas Maccabæus. In the times which followed, (those of the war with the Romans, and of the siege of Jerusalem,) this sect of Zealots fell into great excesses, violence, cruelty, and bloodshed; but we have no reason to think that such was the case from the first. They may have been in the time of St. Simon, (as their name professed,) zealous for the law, for the worship of Almighty God, for the temple; and the holy apostle may have been of their number before his call, without thereby incurring any guilt. If, on the other hand, St. Simon had this name given to

him after his call, it would seem to denote some especial zeal and fervency of spirit, some holy jealousy for God's honour, some holy indignation against sin; such as marked out St. Simon even from among the glorious company of apostles.

We have no further notice of St. Simon in holy Scripture than that he was called and ordained to be an apostle of Jesus Christ; was one of them unto whom our Lord, after His resurrection, gave power and commission to minister in His name: "Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

It should seem, from early Church writers, that Africa was the chief region of this apostle's preaching, that is, Egypt, Cyrene, Mauritania; some have thought that he also preached in this very country of Britain, and was here martyred; but it would seem more probable, from early writers, that the place of his martyrdom was some city in Persia.

Thus little do we know of the life of one who was an apostle, and distinguished, even among

apostles, for zeal and fervency of spirit. The great men of this world think it a great thing to hand down their names and their histories to future ages; yet what is earthly honour to that honour which cometh from God only? We know little, it may be, of St. Simon's life and labours for Christ and His gospel, beyond the fact that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ; yet how much is there in that one word, an apostle! one sent of Christ, even as Christ was sent of His Father; a teacher and preacher of the gospel; among the first in that spiritual line, through whom the richest gifts of the Holy Ghost have descended in unbroken succession to the present day; one of the foundation-stones whereon hath been builded Christ's One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone."

And what has been said of St. Simon will, in great measure, apply to St. Jude also, of whom the notices in holy Scripture and early Church writers are few and scanty, although less so than in the case of St. Simon. St. Jude also bore two other names, and is thereby distinguished from Judas Iscariot, who betrayed our Lord. He is called in St. Matthew "Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus." Of these, Thaddæus was pro-

bably only another form of Judas, and is said to mean a person zealous in praising God. Lebbæus either means a native of the town of Lebba in Galilee, or (as is most probable) is derived from a Hebrew word meaning heart, and so denoted prudence and understanding. St. Jude was a near relation of our blessed Lord; he is called (with three others) our Lord's brother in St. Matthew's Gospel, (xiii. 55): "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?" Not that they were, strictly speaking, our Lord's brethren, (for the Church hath ever held that the blessed Virgin, our Lord's mother, was mother to no others,) but they were either the children of Joseph by a former wife, or the sons of a sister of the Virgin Mary, and so cousins of our Lord; but, however this may be, St. Jude in his Epistle speaks not of his kindred to our Lord according to the flesh, but of his own low estate; thus he writes: "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ."

There is one especial notice of St. Jude in St. John's Gospel, (xiv. 23). In our Lord's last conversation with His apostles, on the night before He suffered, He had said unto them, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them,

he it is that loveth Me : and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." On this, we read, St. Jude put to Him a question, which would serve to shew that he, in common with the Jews, yet entertained some idea of the kingdom of the Messiah as of an earthly kingdom, a kingdom of this world : "Judas saith unto Him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" And to this our Saviour made answer, that it is to faith, and obedience, and love, that Christ is made manifest ; that it is to these the doctrines, the privileges, the blessings of His holy religion are made known : the evil, unbelieving, unloving world knew not, and could not know and receive, the Saviour ; the kingdom of God is within us ; His temple is the heart of man ; and that temple must be made and kept ready, and prepared for Him, by repentance, faith, obedience, love, holiness ; such are the conditions of the manifestation and in-dwelling presence of Jesus Christ, and of the Father, by the Holy Ghost : "Jesus answered, and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words ; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." And thus

it was that, after His resurrection, our Lord shewed Himself chiefly to His apostles, the chosen witnesses of His resurrection, as St. Peter says, Acts x. 40: "Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." And this is but, as it were, a type and figure of God's dealings with man in all times. Christ is not manifested to men of sinful lives, or of carnal and impenitent hearts. As St. Paul himself says: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." It is a great and serious truth in our religious life, that Jesus Christ and His Gospel are revealed to us in proportion to our faith, love, and obedience.

After our Lord's ascension, the countries in which St. Jude preached the gospel, were (as is most probable) Judæa, Samaria, Idumæa, Syria, and Mesopotamia; he also is thought to have suffered martyrdom in Persia. There is, as you know, in the volume of holy Scripture, one Epi-

stle (or letter) of St. Jude, which is called general, as being addressed to all Christians in general, not (as the Epistle to the Romans, for instance, or the Epistle to the Corinthians) to any one particular Church. The Epistle is very short, but there are very few, if any, portions of holy Scripture more serious, and solemn, and awful. A portion of it you have heard read to-day. It is full of exhortations to Christians, to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all) delivered unto the saints." And again: "building up themselves on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, to keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." It is also full of warnings to Christians against the teachers "of false doctrine, heresy, and schism," leading, as such do at the last, to "hardness of heart, and contempt of God's Word and Commandment." It is also full of meaning to Christians against other grievous sins, which also, too often, grow up of the self-will of the hearer, and of the false doctrine of the teacher: "blindness of heart; pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy; envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness; fornication, and other deadly sin; the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil." Against such false teachers and un-

godly livers, such are St. Jude's awful warnings to the Church. "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ . . . these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, (the first who shed man's blood,) and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, (the false prophet, who sought to curse those whom God had not cursed, even God's own people,) and perished in the gain-saying of Core, (in the wilful rebellion of Korah against Aaron, God's anointed priest, and Moses, and God.) . . . But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, (from the Church of Christ,) sensual, having not the Spirit."

But even here the Christian is not to forget compassion; holy fear and jealousy for the faith,

and hatred for sin, must be joined with pity for the wanderer and the sinner, especially whenever he shall seem to have wandered or sinned through weakness or ignorance, rather than wilfully and profanely. The Christian, and especially the Christian pastor, must distinguish between the deceiver and the deceived, between the wilful teacher of heresy and the unwilling follower. "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Such are the warnings of St. Jude on the duty of Christians to save (at least) themselves, and (if possible) others also, from false doctrine, heresy, and schism.

And surely we must all feel that such are greatly needed by us, more or less needed perhaps by all. Strictness of faith has passed away from us, no less than strictness of life. Men have learnt to be careless about religious error, indifferent to religious truth, and tolerant even of heresy; even as (only in a yet greater degree than) they have learnt to be careless, and indifferent, and tolerant of evil and sinful practices. But the gospel of Jesus Christ, as His apostles preached it, is a religion of strictness; strictness of faith no less than strictness of life. And so the Church

hath ever taught, that "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. . . . This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." And thus the words of the Church, and of the Creed of St. Athanasius, which we have this day repeated, are as an echo of the words of the apostle St. Jude, and of the words of our blessed Lord also, when He said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." No doubt the Almighty and All-merciful God knoweth and readeth the hearts: He knoweth how far any are cut off from the Church and her means of grace, by their own sin or that of others; He knoweth how far any may have fallen into, or continue in, false doctrine and heresy, through their own sin or the sin of others; and He will judge all such. He will draw the line, which man may not draw, between what is in a man's own power and rests (under God) upon his own will, and what is not in a man's own power and will. And He will judge, in righteousness and in mercy also, both the servant who knew not his Lord's will and did commit things worthy of stripes, and the servant who knew his Lord's will, but prepared not himself, nor did according to His

will. But, after all, all holy Scripture, and all the teaching of Christ's Church in all ages, witness to this,—that there is a grave and solemn responsibility resting upon us all in this matter, more than we usually allow, or like to allow; that God's truth is holy, blessed, and sanctifying to such as receive it, and very awful to such as deny it, or refuse to receive it; nay, that every part and portion of it is so; that we cannot refuse or deny any portion of it whatever, without more or less of sin and danger,—usually not without serious sin and fearful danger; that it is a serious matter to set aside any part of God's message by His apostles and by His Church.

Would that the lesson were not called for at this very day.

May God keep us from this sin and danger; may He give us grace so to be joined together in unity of spirit by the doctrine of His holy apostles, that we may be made an holy temple unto Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sermons for the Christian Seasons.

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

HEBREWS xii. 1. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*

WE on this day close the series of festivals of our Christian year. The order, as you remember, begins in Advent with St. Andrew the Apostle, the first called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and ends with this festival of All Saints. During many ages of the Church, there were many more days set apart in memory of God's saints than there are now, with special services and lessons. Not only did the whole Church commemorate, in common, them who had been the chief martyrs for Christ, or the chief teachers of His Church, or the chief patterns of holiness; but each particular Church kept sacred the

memory of its own sainted bishops, and teachers, and martyrs.

But three hundred years ago, the then bishops of our Church judged it necessary to take away from the number of these holy days. In length of time, great corruptions of doctrine and practice had grown up, and men had been taught, or (at the least) had been allowed, without reproof from those who should have reproved them, to look to the merits and intercessions of the saints more than to the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. Our bishops then, as I said, thought it right, where such lamentable corruptions existed, to take away from the number of these holy days. Besides the days which are kept holy in memory of the holy apostles, they retained only the festivals of the blessed Virgin St. Mary, of the evangelists St. Mark and St. Luke, of St. Stephen the first martyr, of St. John Baptist, of the Holy Innocents, and of St. Michael and All Angels. For no others were any special services retained. Their names indeed stand, on their several days, in the calendar; but the direct and solemn commemoration, by our Church, of all other of God's saints, is confined to this one day. Now our rulers in the Church then did what may have

been right and necessary under their circumstances. Still we may lament, as they doubtless lamented, the sins and corruptions which rendered such an act necessary. Many holy names, many examples of primitive piety, faith, charity, self-denial, patient suffering for Christ, were thus withdrawn from the contemplation of the Church. It was a stern duty and a stern necessity which forced them to be silent on the holy and edifying lives of the saints of the universal Church, or of those whom the good providence of God had raised up in our English Church. All these we now commemorate on this one day. God's elder saints,—Abraham, Joseph, Job, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel,—of whom St. Paul writes, “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds

and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Or as they appeared in the spirit to St. John: "After this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

This one day of the year, as I said, alone remains to us, whereon to commemorate all the saints of God; those who before Christ's coming yet lived and died in the fear and obedience of God, and in the faith of Christ, believing in Him who was to come, even as we believe in Him who has come into the world, to redeem us with His precious blood; all who, with Abraham, rejoiced in spirit to see the day of Christ, and saw it, and were glad; all who, with Moses, chose rather to "suffer affliction with the people of

God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward ;” all “ the goodly company of the prophets,” who spake before of Christ, and witnessed to Him, not only in their words, but (many of them) in their lives and in their deaths.

And as we thus, on this one day, commemorate all the saints of the patriarchal and Jewish Church ; all the saints whose names have come down to us in the Old Testament ; and with them all that countless host, who have left no name or record upon earth, but whose names, we may not doubt, are written in the Book of Life ; so do we, on this one day, commemorate all the saints of the universal Church of Christ.

“ The noble army of martyrs,” whose blood was the seed of the Church, who witnessed a faithful witness for Christ, who died on the rack, or on the cross, or at the stake, or by wild beasts, or by whatever torments the malice of man or Satan could devise, rather than deny or blaspheme Christ, or pray to or offer sacrifice to idols.

The zealous and fervent preachers of Christ's Gospel among the heathen, the missionaries who bore the Word of God and the Sacraments of the

Church into distant and barbarous nations ; and, among them, the holy men by whose labours of love this very land of England was converted, once and again, to the faith of Christ.

The holy bishops, such as St. Chrysostom, who faithfully ruled the Churches of Christ, holding fast that "form of sacred words" which had been committed to their trust.

The learned and godly teachers, such as St. Athanasius, whom God, from time to time, raised up in His Church, to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints, and to rebuke the profane and vain babblings of false teachers and seducers, wherewith the peace of the Church was disquieted.

And with them all who, in their several orders, whether of the priesthood or of the laity, have lived and died in the true faith and fear of God ; all who, by God's grace, and in God's service, have lived holy and self-denying lives ; all who have mortified the flesh, and its lusts, by prayer, by watching, by fasting, by abstinence ; all who have adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour by good works, by alms, by forgiveness of injuries ; all who have borne suffering patiently, whether persecution for Christ's sake and a good conscience, or pain, or sickness,

or poverty, or loneliness of spirit; all these, and all such as these, do we, on this one day, commemorate. "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Whatever may have been their trials and sufferings in this life, for the truth's sake, and for duty and a good conscience, all such are now over for ever. They are at rest, where there is neither sin nor sorrow. "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality. And, having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded; for God proved them, and found them worthy for Himself They that put their trust in Him shall understand the truth; and such as be faithful in love shall abide

with Him : for grace and mercy is to His saints, and He hath care for His elect The righteous live for evermore ; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand ; for with His right hand shall He cover them, and with His arm shall He protect them."

And now to return to the great lesson of this day. " Almighty God hath so knit together His elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of His Son, Christ our Lord," that all, the living and the dead in Christ, God's elder saints and the youngest baptized child, are all one in Him ; branches in the one true Vine, living stones in the one true spiritual Temple, members of the one mystical Body. Such is the Communion of Saints. A great and awful mystery indeed, yet one which has place already in all who are living in the true faith and fear of God. They already have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, by the Spirit ; and, in Him, with all the members of His mystical body ; as writes St. Paul : " But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to

an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

If such be our Christian privileges, how great must be our Christian responsibility. The saints of old, the best and holiest, were but, by nature, even such as we are. They had the same fallen and sinful nature, the same trials, the same dangers, the same spiritual enemies which we have. And we have all that they had: the same God, the same Saviour, the same Holy Spirit, the same Word of God, the same Church, the same Sacraments, the same means of grace. We have all that they had,—much more than many of them had.

May our lives be as holy, our deaths as peaceful, our rest in Christ as assured as theirs. May God give us grace to learn the practical lesson from this day's festival, "so to follow His blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which He hath prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Then shall we indeed have reason to bless the wise

and merciful providence of Almighty God, who hath preserved and continued in our Church this solemn commemoration of all His saints, as a link which binds us to the good, and faithful, and holy of all times, and in all branches of the Church. The Church of Jesus Christ, at all times and in all places, on earth or in paradise, is one,—one body; and of that one body we all are members. This or that branch may be estranged one from another, yet are they all one in the one true Vine; and the saints whom God hath raised up in any one branch of the Church, are not the saints of that branch alone, but are the saints of the universal Church: all the true and living branches have part in them, all have communion with them. A thought very full of comfort in these fallen and evil days, when visible unity and external communion hath been lost, or, at the least, suspended. The more may we value that unity which is invisible, that communion which is inward; that unity wherein all the branches are one in the one true Vine, all the members one in the one Body of Jesus Christ; that communion which joins us to all the saints of God, in every age and in every land, the living, and the faithful departed in their place of rest.

And thus, with the thought of the Communion of Saints, we close our Christian year. Many have been the patterns of holiness which the Church has set before us in her course of holy days; many the lessons which she has essayed to teach. And well will it be for us, Christian brethren, if we have learned those lessons, if we have striven to be conformed to those patterns. Each year, as it passes, sets us so much further on our course, so much nearer to our latter end. Are we, by God's grace, better prepared for the hour of death and for the day of judgment? Are our lives more holy and righteous? are our hearts more drawn to our unseen home? are our tempers more conformed to the pattern of God's saints? are our affections more set upon heaven? are we, that is, more fitted to be with God's saints in their place of rest, and, with them, to praise God for ever and ever? The "Communion of Saints" is indeed a most necessary article of our Christian faith; but it will be a stay and comfort to each one of us, so far as we are seeking now to live holy and consistent lives, and to follow the saints of God in our daily duties, and in our daily trials. Thus, and thus only, may we hope to be co-heirs with them of the kingdom of heaven, even of that fulness of joy which is in

God's presence, of that pleasure which is at God's right hand for evermore, "those unspeakable joys which God hath prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him."

May such, by God's grace, be our blessed lot; to be followers of the saints of God in our daily lives, to be partakers with the saints of God in their place of rest, and in the resurrection unto everlasting life.

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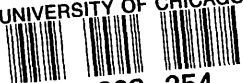
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